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JESUS CHRIST IN HUMAN EXPERIENCE

By
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**This volume is affectionately
inscribed to**

MY WIFE

**who for twelve years has been
my companion, counselor and
critic.**

THE AUTHOR

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INTRODUCTORY NOTE

IN the preparation of this volume I have not consulted the trinity—Exegesis, Homiletics and Logic—and it is probable that there have been grave crimes committed against each of them. I have taken a few—not all—of the New Testament characters other than the Apostles, and have striven to point out a few of the places where Jesus Christ touched their experiences, believing that human nature remains constant throughout the centuries, and that what was helpful to mankind two thousand years ago will be helpful to him to-day.

It has not been my purpose to make these studies expository as such. If any are in search of grammatical niceties or models of exegesis, they are referred to the critical and explanatory commentaries, and such other works as deal with the constructive speech of the New Testament. I have set forth with the deliberate intention of forgetting the hard-and-fast rules of homiletics. Far be it from me to pull the petals from

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the rose. I prefer to admire it as a whole—to preserve its delicate color and enjoy its subtle odor, recording some of my impressions as I have sat by it, without the microscopic glass of the exegete and the text critic. If these chapters have some humble part in helping men to a better knowledge of our common Lord and Master, I shall be satisfied.

THE AUTHOR.

INTRODUCTION

THE most important question known to the modern mind is the place of Christ in human life. Its story is a spiritual romance. St. Paul called it "the mystery which hath been hid for ages and generations," but said also, "Now it hath been manifested to his saints, to whom God was well pleased to make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles, which is Christ in you the hope of glory."

We can imagine nothing higher than this. It is man's main chance in the universe. The coming of Christ transfigures personality. His "love makes great the great and small." The presence of these transfigured personalities in the world purifies society and throws over humanity, as light hovers about flowers, the golden glow of the eternal. It is the secret of the Church and the hidden life which makes the human race grow toward the morning.

This book is an exposition in concrete

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examples of these fascinating ideas. It tells how Christ's personality influences and develops human personality; how he illumines all the questions of this serious and perplexing world, and how as men receive him they become invested with the moral omnipotence which gives victory over inner weakness and adverse environment, and elevates the soul to spiritual greatness.

It is a book of doctrines and devotions, of ethics and ideals, which will at once satisfy the weaver of dreams and the doer of deeds. Those who read well its sparkling pages will learn what it is to be a Christian, and find the way to the life which lies perpetually under the enchantment of the Christ experience. B. A. ABBOTT.

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I

WISDOM'S SEARCH

(Matt. 2 : 1, 2.)

UNDER the dreamy skies of starlit India, Persia and Arabia, the sons of men spun the first threads of the higher wisdom, and gradually wove them into the fabric of human thought—subtle philosophy, mysticism, and, strangest of all religious phenomena, prophecy. Deep in the heart of the ancient Orient the order of the Magi developed. They did not lust for world-extensive empire, nor had they an ear for the clash of the sword. The Phalanx and the Solid Square were not their inventions. Their wonder-book was the clear blue vault of the Eastern sky, and its pages they scanned with eager eyes for some token of the eternal God.

It may be that the hopes of Israel had filtered through the East; that some burning coal from Isaiah's altar had fallen in their midst, some Paul among the Areopa-

gites, a captive, a traveler, yet withal a generous soul who had unfolded to them the expectations of Israel. It may be that the wild sons of Ishmael possessed some of that religious genius which characterized their Hebrew cousins. At any rate, in the heart of Asia men were feeling after God, hoping they might find him. And when that strange, new star suddenly blazed in the heavens, their hunger for a more complete knowledge of God was intensified, and they were led out, by the inner power of the irresistible, toward the land of Jacob; yet, like the great Abraham, they journeyed not knowing whither they went, but confidently expecting a splendid consummation of their pilgrimage.

I

Man is a restless creature. There is a spark of eternal fire in his breast which is never satisfied. It is constantly urging him into strange places—pointing out difficult roads—creating in his mind fancies which taunt him with their interrogations. If we are normal, we are all Columbuses; the pull of the horizon is tremendous; few can resist the challenge of mystery. We ven-

ture mightily if there is the barest possibility of adding the smallest jot to our treasures. We are born hungry—hungry to know; and this is the hunger that drives us out to follow the star because it promises something.

And in this man reveals the divine within him. How else can we explain God's creative acts? Why the universe, the earth, and man? Why did not God retain them as an *idea* simply, reposing in his mind? Earth was not needed either for throne or footstool, and man himself supplies nothing essential to the nature of God. But there is a side of the divine nature which can be satisfied only in the expenditure of creative energy. It expressed itself primarily in the formation of matter; secondly, in intelligence, and, lastly, in redemption. These are worthy of the mind of God, and in them we believe he takes profound delight.

As man is the offspring of God, it is but natural that he should undertake creative feats of greater or less magnitude; and thus he does—in the physical, mental and spiritual realms. The continent he has belted together with steel, our shelves re-

veal the expenditure of his intellect, and the Bible and history have shown the created spiritual life in thousands of individual hearts. Men are transforming abstract theological ideas into concrete redemptive realities, but it is a creative process.

There were a myriad stars in those Oriental skies—they varied in magnitude and brilliancy—but none of them thrilled the Wise-men until the star of Bethlehem appeared. It was an invitation—it called for action; it excited the spirit of exploration; it was a challenge. Had not the East—aye, the whole world—been waiting for the doors of God to open; and was not this his token? But to whom it might lead—or where—they little knew; but they followed on.

We miss many a glorious thing because our eyes are downward. Stars appear in the heavens, not in the muck-bank nor in the ledger column. There are swamps of unbelief and bogs of fad in our society, and over them hangs many an elusive will-o'-the-wisp, but, when pursued, they lead nowhere. The tragedy is that many have taken these elusive lights for stars to

guide, and when they should be on the solid earth they are left floundering in the darkness and mire—alone.

It was the star of Bethlehem that thrilled the slow, plodding East into action. It led those men on a long, difficult journey, among strange and hostile people, through innumerable perils by the way; but always the eager question was on their lips: "Where is He?" So ask the multitude in their weariness, earnestly, and often pathetically: "Where is He?" Above all things else, the Church of our Lord must reveal him to those whose lives are barren.

Life can not be complete without some satisfying knowledge of its source, mission and destiny. We do not exist as castles in the air, without foundation; the life of the soul rests in the infinite God. In him only can we explain the intricate mysteries of human existence—its passions, affections, longings, hopes and fears. In touching Jesus Christ the soul touches God; it is not galvanized, but vitalized; it is quickened by a new spirit; it becomes a "new creation." Its life is not measured by duration, but by hearts touched, souls enriched, burdens lifted, gospel applied. Since the coming of

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Christ men have learned to turn thought back upon Spirit, and have discovered something of the wisdom of redemption. We have learned by bitter experience that the body is mortal, but what we expend upon the soul is treasure for eternity. The life of the soul, therefore, spells fruitage and reproduction, and the soul that has these has arrived at the manger; it has learned the secret of the Lord.

II

It is singular that Jesus gave to the world no carefully prepared statement of his doctrines; he prepared no formula, no syllogism, no philosophical dissertation. This is all the more remarkable when we know that the fulfillment of his mission depended on men's understanding of him. All that the world knows of his teaching is what a few men gathered out of their memories after he had left them. But in those brief chapters is revealed "the wisdom of God and the power of God." They are "seed," they are "dynamite"—"seed" in the heart growing into new life, "dynamite" in society tearing up the false and unjust standards and loosening up the stony hearts

of men for the seed of the Kingdom. "If a man thirst, let him come to me and drink;" "I am the bread of life;" "I am the good shepherd." Men never heard such teaching before. Not only were the sons of Abraham hungry for the bread which did not perish, but the dwellers of Mesopotamia and the uttermost parts as well. Christ meets the most commonplace hungers in the hearts of men.

After all, does the wisdom of this world answer the questions which most trouble and perplex the heart of man? Is the multitude hungry for a perfectly scientific and philosophical definition of "time" and "space"? Is the plowman interested in the development of the single cell into the complex organism of the human body? No; he is listening for the voice which speaks of lightened loads. That the sun shines and the showers fall are facts sufficient for him. The wisdom of Jesus is not in abstract discussions, but in concrete realities. "Whether he is a sinner, I know not: *but one thing I know*, that, whereas I was blind, I now see." That was worth ten thousand technical lectures on cataracts and paralysis of the optic nerve. This is the

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superiority of the wisdom of action over the wisdom of theory.

Human wisdom left to itself is likely to feel its limitations most keenly—even to chafe under any restraint. Note the effect these limitations had on some of the poetic geniuses:

“Still thou art blest compared wi’ me!
The present only touches thee;
But, och! I backward cast my e’e
On prospects drear!
An’ forward, though I canna’ see,
I guess an’ fear.”

“We look before and after,
And pine for what is not;
Our sincerest laughter
With some pain is fraught;
Our sweetest songs are those that tell
The saddest thought.”

They have no message for the weary heart. Not so with Jesus; he does not “guess an’ fear.” He is never clearer or more authoritative than when he stands at the border. He speaks of “my Father’s house” with a familiarity born out of long and intimate acquaintance. He speaks of the glory he had with the Father before the world was, a relation so inherent that it is sacrilege to question it. He stood at

the grave of Lazarus and calmly declared: "I am the resurrection and the life." Audaciously he announced: "I am the door: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me." In such he is insistent. And who can question his right? He is the revelation of the Father. He is the Mediator between a holy God and a sinful man; divine, knowing the nature of God; human, knowing the frailty of the flesh. "Tempted in all points like as we are, yet without sin."

The spontaneous question on the lips of all those who heard Jesus was: "Whence hath this man this wisdom?" That he possessed it could not be gainsaid even by his enemies. When a son has complete knowledge of his father's plans, he takes delight in handling every transaction carefully and discreetly, because it is his father's business. Jesus had complete knowledge of his Father's plans, hence the wisdom and authority with which he spoke and acted. When men tried to force him into a corner they found themselves impaled on the horns of their own dilemma.

Christ did not write his wisdom in musty books to be forgotten; he gave it the perennial life of the lily, the grass and

the sparrow. He gave it freshness from Genneseret, and strength from the hills of Judah; from the winds he gave it dominion, and from the sky, clearness. He gave it power from the tempests of Galilee, and persuasion from the springtime. He gave it light from the sun, depth from eternity, and life from *himself*.

III

Our mortal spirits hover between the states of joy and sorrow, and our whole human experience is colored by them. Into these experiences the Christ projects himself wearing a number of titles which signify his various offices, but the most singular appellation is "Man of sorrows." He wept at the grave of his friend Lazarus. He gave the multitude a hard saying about eating his flesh and drinking his blood, and many of his disciples thereupon turned back and walked no more with him. He looked upon Jerusalem through patriotic tears, seeing a bank raised against her and a pagan army pounding at her walls. While he was breaking the bread and passing the cup, Judas was selling him; in the garden his disciples slept, and at the cross they all

forsook him and fled. Sorrow was his portion, and he tasted death for every man.

Sorrow is part of mortal experience, the fruit of the tree, and as long as we are in the body we may expect it. But note the wisdom of Jesus how he would fortify us against loss: "Lay not up for yourselves treasures on earth, but in heaven." "Set your affections on things above, not on things earthly," counseled the apostle who probably knew best the heart of the Master. Woven through the somber garment of human sorrow is the golden thread: "We shall be like him when he shall appear" in glory. Sorrow teaches that the mission of life is not found in serving self, but in serving others. Sorrow prepares the soul for God.

"O cross that liftest up my head,
I dare not ask to fly from thee;
I lay in dust life's glory dead,
And from the ground there blossoms red
Life that shall endless be."

But the joys of this world are by no means confined to anticipation. Jesus was interested in the social life of the people, else how can we explain his presence at the wedding in Cana? Did he sit in their

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midst a pale, dyspeptic saint, radiating gloom over their festivities? If Jesus was entirely a Man of sorrows, then the angels should have sung a "*Miserere*" instead of a "*Te Deum*." Jesus taught men to get at a pleasure deeper and more satisfying than the convivialities of the dining-room. Seek reconciliation with the man who has wronged you, love your enemies, pray for your persecutors, preach the gospel to the whole creation. This is the Christian's joy—a joy made full when the sheaves are gathered, the joy of the husbandman at the vintage, the joy of the shepherd that brings back the sheep that was lost, the father's joy when he clasps to his heart the prodigal boy. It is the joy of saving men; and no other joy is worth while, and no other joy is abiding.

There was joy in Samaria because Philip preached Christ unto them; the Ethiopian went on his way rejoicing because he had found Jesus Christ; the household of Cornelius magnified God, and the disciples of Iconium were filled with joy at Paul's preaching. Why all this joy? Because the wisdom of Jesus Christ touches all phases of human need. Human experience has

been enriched and glorified by the paradox of Christianity, a stumbling-block to the Jew and foolishness to the Greek, but to us that are saved it is the power of God. "We speak wisdom, however, among them that are fullgrown: yet a wisdom not of this world, nor of the rulers of this world, who are coming to nought: but we speak God's wisdom in a mystery, even the wisdom that hath been hidden, which God fore-ordained before the worlds unto our glory: which none of the rulers of this world hath known: for had they known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory."

Holy Son of God, thou didst come forth from the Father; thou didst humble thyself to be born of a virgin. Thou didst draw to thy manger the sages of the East, and, when their eyes beheld thee, their hearts rejoiced; they poured their treasures before thee. Such as we have, Lord Jesus, we bring to thee. Thou hast made our darkness light, our discords harmony, and our weakness strength. Give us perseverance to follow the star into the heavenly Bethlehem, where we shall behold thee, not in infant weakness in a manger, but in eternal glory on thy throne.

II

HEROD: HATRED GONE MAD

(Matt. 2: 3, 4, 7, 8, 16.)

WICKEDNESS always fights back; it advances under the cover of night with wool-shod feet and answers with a club what it can not with argument. Unable to locate the exact infant to whom the prophet referred, Herod ordered a wholesale slaughter, hoping thus to catch this young Prince, "born King of the Jews." Christ means different things to different men: while the Wise-men "rejoiced with exceeding great joy," Herod was troubled, and "all Jerusalem with him." Herod's conscience was not dead, neither was he unmindful of his past—"a reign almost unparalleled for reckless cruelty and bloodshed." The misdeeds of his life came up more vividly than the ghosts of the dead, but he was

"in blood

Steeped so far, that, should I wade no more,
Returning were as tedious as to go o'er."

I

It would be a mistake to say that Herod was not religious—at times. When wicked men scent trouble they straightway become pious. Herod did not hesitate to mask himself in the garb of a saint when it was necessary. He knew that somewhere in his own dominions was a child whom the travelers from beyond the desert had saluted as “King of the Jews”—ominous words! But where this young King was, or how strong his following, Herod knew not. He knew the Jews openly hoped for a Messiah who would break the Roman yoke; perhaps this was he. So it were better for the Idumean to dissemble until he knew his ground. If this young Prince reached maturity, who could stand against him? Therefore, find the nest and harrow it.

It is one thing to secure a throne; it is quite something else to hold it. Not every soldier is an Alfred the Great or a George Washington. Statesmanship and military prowess do not always reside in the same heart. Herod possessed both—and more. He had the military genius of Scipio and

the æstheticism of Pericles, the strategy of Trajan and the devilishness of de Medici; he purred like a kitten, but he struck like a lion. Opposition only fed his fury, but he held his cyclonic temper in leash until the right moment; then he made terrible history. A few human monsters have walked across the pages of Time—Nero, Caligula, Borgia, Herod. Yet withal Herod had a conscience, and it was at work.

“My conscience hath a thousand tongues,
And every tongue brings in a several tale,
And every tale condemns me for a villain.
Perjury, perjury in the high'st degree;
Murder, stern murder, in the direst degree,
Throng the bar, crying all, ‘Guilty! Guilty!’
I shall despair. There is no creature loves me;
And if I die, no soul will pity me;
Nay, wherefore should they, since that I myself
Find in myself no pity to myself?
Methought the souls of all that I had murdered
Came to my tent and every one did threat
To-morrow’s vengeance on the head of Richard.”

In the extension of the Kingdom of God Jesus pronounced a blessing on those who made their homes secondary to the work of the Church, which is the work of humanity. Men can not give their lives to the gospel ministry and expect to become rich in this world’s goods; but he who

forsakes them "for my sake and the kingdom's shall have them a thousand-fold even in this life." True, the title may not be in his name, but they are his to enjoy, nevertheless; what more is to be desired? But to Herod there was but one person—himself. He was above home, religion and country. For himself he did not hesitate to sacrifice any or all of these. Herod the *Great!* If he expected success in his search for the newly born King, then, under the guise of holiness and piety and deep religious zeal, he would seek those who were expecting Him. O scribe, the king commands: "Where is the Christ to be born?" It is an easy thing in all ages to *command* interpretation of Scripture—or *buy* it. There are plenty of Balaams who are willing to curse Israel for a price. Men who are murdering babies with soothing syrups and child labor should first call together the "chief priests and scribes." Executives who use state offices for personal aggrandizement should first "see what the scriptures say." If men lie, steal and murder, let them at least do it orthodoxly; see "what is written through the prophet." There are plenty of itching palms which

will interpret smoothly even for the saloonist and the white-slaver. When the devil and all Jerusalem are troubled, let them dangle a fat salary or a bishopric before the "priests and scribes," and *any* interpretation will be forthcoming. Men have seen wonderful things in the Scriptures when they looked at the sacred writings through the promise of much gold—sins remitted, purgatory depopulated; aye, infallibility itself!

II

Having secured information from the "priests and scribes," Herod turned to the Wise-men who had actually seen the star and who had made the long journey in search of the young Child. In this he still retains his "piety." To these Wise-men who came from a far-off kingdom he not only granted a private audience, but he sent for them and received them "privily." No imperial garments on his person, no jeweled crown, no throne, no pomp and splendor of state about him; simply a man talking to men. The only way to get confidences was to invite them, to *seem* to place himself in the same mental and spiritual attitude

as they. We can almost hear the pious cant flowing from his lips; how anxiously he was waiting for the Messiah, and how he longed to worship him! Would they not feel obligated to a king who had treated them thus, and they from a strange and distant land?

They were without credentials or influence, yet they had on their lips a mystic name, "the King of the Jews," and there was magic in that name. It "troubled Herod" and "all Jerusalem." It drew the sages from the distant Orient; it opened the starry skies for the heavenly choir, and their song was: "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will among men." That name is open sesame to palace and hut alike; it is common ground, for of what and whom did the king and the Wisemen talk if not of Jesus? And they discussed him with earnest care. Here both extremes of human experience touched the Christ—passionate devotion and diabolical hatred. The one saw in him hope, the other a menace—a menace to a bloody and selfish throne, hope for the world of suffering men.

Herod intended to use them as tools:

"Go and search *exactly* for the young child; and when you have found him, bring me word." Exact information! Herod was a scientist. He gave these unknown men a special commission; he made them ministers extraordinary. Was it not a great honor to be thus designated? But what were *they* to get? The empty honor; nothing more. When the devil would use men he gives them the semblance of power. Many the man who has been given an office that his good name might be used in furthering rascality and double-dealing. He accepted the station honestly intending to be square and do his duty, but he awakened to find his hands tied. Wickedness must have the face and garb of respectability, hence it often seizes upon men of unblemished character and untarnished name and makes tools of them. Learn to analyze motives; remember Herod. Sudden conversion on the part of gamblers, grafters, boodlers, liars and professional office-holders may always be regarded with suspicion. When "all Jerusalem" came to John for baptism, he demanded "fruits meet for repentance"; and we are justified in putting all such on probation. A high-

sounding title, when reduced to its lowest terms, may be very empty of meaning. It may be little more than artistic flattery, a ruse to discover the cradle of the new-born King.

"That I also may come and worship him." A slip here would reveal his motives. When he deals with pious men, he is pious; that is diplomacy. In his excessive "piety" he longs to worship Him, as the wolf *worships* the lamb. Never did the treachery of this monster stand out more vividly than when he sat in the company of these sages whose pure purposes had been so frankly spoken, and announced his great desire to "worship" the Babe of Bethlehem. If *villain* had not lost much of its strength by long association with the English language, we would thus stigmatize him; if *impostor* burned and blistered the tongue, we might venture to speak it of Herod; if we could pull *fiend* directly out of the netherworld, sputtering with sulphur, we would brand him with it; if *devil* were not an ecclesiastical term, we would confer the title upon this Idumean king, for his whole portrait is "palled in the dunnest smoke of hell."

III

"There is a destiny which shapes our ends,
Rough hew them as we may."

No man makes much headway fighting against the Lord and Right. He did not send his Son into the world to fall a prey to this black monster before his work was accomplished. These Wise-men were also godly men; they returned to their own country by another way. With divine insight they penetrated Herod's murderous scheme and refused to be participants in it; they were "wise men."

Herod fitly represents the negative element in society. It is at its worst when in contact with the best. The virtues of Christ and Christianity make no appeal to it; instead, they arouse the sleeping devil within it. It was the "Herods" who conducted those awful persecutions before Constantine; they were at work mightily during the Inquisition and the Reformation. Herod still lives in modern society in our unchristian business order, commercialized vice and the liquor traffic; in the exhausting drafts upon society by cigarettes, fast living and the devilishness of men who are

the perverts of our civilization. We are already getting a race of undersized men and nervous women. He is "exceeding wroth," and when he spares not his own, how can we expect him to spare the innocents?

"A voice was heard in Ramah,
Weeping and great mourning,
Rachel weeping for her children;
And she would not be comforted, because they are not."

All this to destroy the Christ. Yet it is true his doctrines set men at variance; they break homes; they bring on persecutions. Shall we therefore refrain from preaching them? Shall we interpret smoothly and tread softly? No; ancient Israel needed the fiery preaching of its Isaiah and its Amos, and Jerusalem needed the cyclonic attack of John the Baptist. It was because Jesus laid bare the shams and hypocrisy of men that they hated him. Peter and John defied the Sanhedrin; Paul "reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come" before procurators and kings with such vividness and power that they were "terrified." Offenses must come, but woe to that man by whom they come.

Lord, give us the wisdom of the Wise-

men who returned to their country by another way. Forbid that we should be puffed up by the flattery of base men, though kings. Give us courage that we falter not, that we may seek thy glory, being pure and undefiled. May our lives be spent in upholding the right, protecting the innocent, in propagating the truth, and in bringing peace and goodwill to all mankind.

III

MARY: POETIC MOTHERHOOD

(Luke 1:27-29, 39-55.)

IT may be true that the wealth of nations is in its manhood, but every man who has lifted the world a notch higher has a long line of splendid ancestry culminating in some Cornelia, some Hannah, some Nancy Hanks. Out of the unknown Palestinian town of Nazareth came a young woman with such rare graces, such remarkable talents and such extraordinary ability that, of all earth's mothers, she is easily the queen. To Joseph, in that simple Galilean home, the angel announced: "She shall bear a son, and thou shalt call his name JESUS." The Saviour of the world! Obscure? Yes, if by poverty is meant obscurity. Mary and Joseph have frequently been called peasants, but they really had the blood of kings in their veins; they were of the royal line of David. Mary was a kinswoman of Elisabeth, who was of

the family of Aaron—priestly. If ever a woman belonged to the aristocracy, it was Mary; not to the "Four Hundred," which too often means wealth without character. She had the highest wealth—womanhood.

Singularly enough, many of the world's greatest characters have come from homes which knew the meaning of poverty; Spenser, Johnson and Goldsmith all fought the hard battles against want. The homes of Lincoln, Grant and Garfield knew nothing of luxury and little of comfort. But the lack of worldly goods did not impoverish the latent ability of the stock.

In addition to being devout, Mary was possessed of a remarkable poetic temperament, together with a rare ability to "keep" and "ponder."

I

Great revelations are made to open hearts, because beaten ground is closed ground; the seed can not get hold. Mary was a devout woman long before the angel came saying: "Hail, thou that art highly favored, the Lord is with thee." God's highest honor is motherhood.

Are we not in danger of losing—have

we not already in some measure lost—the spirit of devotion which characterized those great mothers in Israel? Many of our twentieth-century mothers are in danger of having their minds closed to the “things” which “troubled” the heart of Mary. In some circles (and too frequently these circles overlap the church circles) it is of more import to know frocks and fancy dances than the genesis of character and true womanhood. If the Redeemer were to be born in this good year of our Lord, would the “Annunciation” be made to the average young woman of twenty? It is the *rule*, and not the exception, of which I speak. Hearts must be made ready before the angels will visit them.

Devotion is a matter of growth; it is not to be applied like a coat of paint, neither, like boards and shingles, nailed on. It can not be acquired in an evening’s study. If a man is not devout on Wednesday, he will not be on Sunday. Devotion is the silver thread on which are strung the twenty-four hours of the day. The soul grows “into the measure of the fulness of the stature of Christ.” Devotion is not in pallid cheeks and upturned eye; neither

is it in pious cant or intonated prayer. It is stirring the depths of the soul; it is the peaceful consciousness that somewhere down in the depths the heart is anchored to the Rock of Ages.

Mary was a devoted woman, and without devotion no woman can become a true mother. She can not do her duty by her offspring unless she has that beautiful confidence which Mary sets forth so magnificently in her song. Mothers are the leaders of the world; they put themselves literally into their children—hopes, fears, passions. It is not irreverent to say that Mary was responsible for the human nature of our Lord; she imparted to him the strength of her splendid womanhood. In common with all patriotic Jews, she was looking for the "consolation of Israel"; she was living in the hope of a larger and more glorious nation; she thought big thoughts. She loved with all the fervency of an Oriental, and yet the same maternal fire burns in the heart of every true woman. Pray God that American motherhood be more introspective; that their children become God's tilled land, God's husbandry.

II

A "poet" is a performer, a maker, a doer. Rhymed prose is not poetry. Poetry eludes definition as life eludes discovery. It appears in the delicate lines of Tennyson and the rugged lines of Browning. When we read at twilight the weird rhythm and dirge-like sequences of Poe, we are conscious of the magnetic spell of his genius. The stately iambs of John Milton are like the blowing of a full-toned organ tuned to a great symphony. Again, the Shakespearean blank verse introduces another quality which is quite as real as the metric strength of Longfellow. Yet in one thing all agree: To produce real poetry, the soul must be on fire. Great poems like Tennyson's "Gleam" and Browning's "Apt Vogler" are inspirations, the crystallizations of great experiences. Poets are seers; they are prophets.

"Poets are the trumpets which sing to battle;
Poets are the unacknowledged legislators of the world."

Whoever said, "Let me write the songs of a nation and I care not who writes its laws," understood the philosophy of national development. Burns did a wonderful

thing for Scotland when he rewrote her songs.

But Mary's song has neither meter nor rhyme; the trochee, dactyl or the iambus is not there. It is not possessed of the measured syllable, but it has a majestic rhythm of which the reader is at once conscious. The glory of God reflects from it; the spirit of the Crusades inspires it; the trumpets of revolution ring through it; the shout of the conqueror echoes in it. It is the Magna Charta of the oppressed; it is the cry from the mountain-top proclaiming the dawn of the Kingdom, when those of low degree shall be exalted and the hungry filled with good things. It is the prophetic vision of the end of the tyrant, the downfall of the proud and the coming of the brotherhood of all mankind. If any man thinks of the mother of our Lord as a bloodless saint who spent her hours counting a rosary and mumbling meaningless prayers, let him study these nine verses of her song; here is fire, revolution, onslaught, victory!

Motherhood is always poetic. True, not every woman is possessed of Mary's temperament; yet does not every mother

feel the poetic thrill when her babe lies on her breast for the first time? Does she not dream when she looks into the face of her infant son? In that faint cry she hears the strong voice of command; in the little arm that helplessly waves in the air she sees a strong arm which will battle for the right. In her own way she dreams out his future, not once counting herself, save as she contributes to his success, and no mother sees her son a failure. Every emotion that plays through his heart is reacted in hers. She has no life but his; for her it is sufficient that she is his mother. Here is rhythm that surpasses Pope or Byron or Shakespeare.

III

Motherhood is a wonderful experience. What does it mean? The Wise-men poured out their treasures and departed; the song of the angels died away, and the shepherds returned to their flocks, and yet no word escaped the lips of Mary. "She kept these sayings, pondering them in her heart." It was no time for curious discussion, but rather for profound meditation.

Those three months Mary and Elisa-

beth were alone in the hill-country of Judah were days of holy preparation for the greatest event in the life of a woman. Prenatal influence? The barren Elisabeth gave the world John the Baptist, and the Virgin Mary gave the earth its Redeemer. It is no light thing to send a soul voyaging toward eternity, hence every mother owes it to her unborn child to be prayerful and meditative, to hear the best, read the best, think the best. Such motherhood can not be a misfortune. Did Mary lament the coming of her child? Not if her song reflects her heart.

The women who bless mankind are not the ones who read what they never wrote, or pass out a page of Goethe or Bergson as their own, but rather the ones who take their highest function seriously, who believe it to be a greater privilege to rear strong children than to tinker with the municipal machinery. The women of America have done some splendid things for the men, but some have done so at tremendous cost. The call is for women who "keep" and "ponder"; it is their sons who stir the world. Elisabeth was of priestly lineage; she proved it by her son. Mary was of

royal blood; she proved it by her offspring. Let the crown of honor be given to the women who rear strong-bodied, healthy-minded children. It is in the mother's heart that Jesus Christ touches human experience most profoundly.

It is a wonderful thing to be a mother: to feel the strange coming of life; to know that brain and muscle are somehow, by God's alchemy, being organized into a human soul, with thoughts, feelings and love; to know that beneath her heart may be the music of the world, the destiny of the nation, the voice of an evangel; strength growing out of weakness, light flashing from darkness; to know that God is in partnership with her, giving mind and life while she gives blood and nourishment; and so the silent, creative process goes on until men say: "A child hath been born." Oh, it is a wonderful thing to be a mother!

Blessed Father, we thank thee for the dignity thou gavest man when thy Son was "born of a woman," and for the splendid example of true motherhood Mary of Nazareth has given the world. We are deeply grateful for the tender hands that ministered to us when we were helpless

babes; we can not repay them for that love that passeth male understanding, for the hours of anxiety, for that journey down to the gates of death—for us. God bless the mothers of the world who to-day watch by the cradles of their infant children. In this splendid mother-love is reflected the

“ . . . love that wilt not let me go,
I yield my weary soul to Thee;
I give Thee back the life I owe,
That in thine ocean depths its flow
May richer, fuller be.”

IV

ZACHARIAS: THE FRUITAGE OF PATIENCE

(Luke 1: 5-25, 57-80.)

RELIGION is the common instinct of the race. There is no tribe, however degenerate, without it; there is no nation, however civilized, that does not possess it. Christianity is a religion of revelation, of purpose. The Spirit of God inspired it; white-haired men figure in it, God-crowned men. Luke introduces his readers to such a man, "a certain priest named Zacharias." He is one of those rare spirits whose lives have enriched the world. What a wealth of men there are in unknown places! For every crisis God has a man ready. Zacharias was "righteous before God, walking in all the commandments of the Lord blameless." What a soul shines here!

I

This aged priest, like Abraham, represents the fruitage of patience. There were

many of the priests who lived in Jericho when not serving at the Temple, but there were a few who scattered out over the country adjacent to Jerusalem. Among these few was Zacharias, who lived to the south of Jerusalem among its "rounded hills" and "broad valleys." Such a place suited him far better than the crowded life of Jericho, for he was a man of meditation. The hills spoke to him of the spiritual promises to Abraham, and in their silent valleys his prophetic eye caught the silvery sheen of the advancing hosts of the army of the Lord. What could the city possess for a man like Zacharias, whose soul ungirded itself in nature's temple—a soul that saw in every blade of grass a poem; in the gray faces of the limestone rocks, oratorios, and to whose ears the gurgle of the springs and the ripple of the stream were music?

Possibly he had never missed making the regular visit to Jerusalem when the "course of Abijah" ministered in the holy service. Long and faithfully he had attended his sacred duty; years had laid their burden upon his venerable shoulders; his head and beard had blossomed white, emblematic of his pure and devoted heart.

But withal there was a great sadness in his life; he had no child. Winter and summer, springtime and autumn, had passed over his simple home possibly forty times, yet its quiet had never been broken by a baby's cry. In the Genesis record there is much of Abraham's importunate pleading for a son; in fact, Jehovah had made the promise contingent upon an heir; but there is nothing in the record that reveals the inner longings of this faithful priest—no rebellion in his heart, no complaint on his lips; he had learned to serve and wait. "For many years this must have been the burden of Zacharias' prayer; the burden of reproach which Elisabeth seemed to carry with her. They waited together these many years, till the evening of life, and the flower of hope had closed its fragrant cup; and still the two sat together in the twilight, content to wait in loneliness, till the night would close around them."

The word of the child is "now." "Tomorrow" is an eternity. If you say, "My child, you can not go until this afternoon," the sobbing answer is, "I want to go *now*." And we are all children; we want the fulfillment of our desires *now*, forgetting that

when "patience has her perfect work" she performs a ripening service for the soul like the kiss of the autumn sun upon the apple's cheek. All young Christians, whether young in experience or in years, are likely to be green and crude, and, if every desire were instantly gratified, would always remain so. It is the peaceful waiting in the hill-country that glorifies life; it is that faithful waiting for to-morrow that burns out the dross. Under its refining touch imperfections fade away, haste disappears, the glow of Christ's spirit transfigures the soul, and the face shines with the glory of the Lord.

No man ever accomplished much in this world unless he loved his job, and no job is worth having unless it can be loved. The office of priest was the highest office in Israel; the high priest was higher than the king. The priestly office began when the nation began, and continued as long as Israel had national life. Ever since he had been of legal age, Zacharias had performed some function of the priestly office. It was a part of his duties; it was a part of *him*. Says Dr. Edersheim: "Only once in a lifetime might a priest enjoy the privilege of

offering incense, and then only by lot. Henceforth he was called rich, and must leave his brethren the hope of the distinction that had been granted to him." During all those years of faithful service Zacharias had never been honored with the office of incensing.

But the honor finally came—came when he did not expect it. After he had spread the incense over the glowing coals, he stepped back to bow in worship, when he beheld, on the right side of the altar, an angelic figure. As angels appeared either to bless or to punish, the heart of the priest was troubled lest he had committed an act of blasphemy. Also, he knew that the people were waiting on the outside for his blessing and benediction. Small wonder fear fell upon him.

What a vision is here! Upon this very spot twenty-five hundred years before, on an altar of rough stones, Abraham, the father of the race, had laid his son as a sacrifice, but when he did so he saw the day of Christ and rejoiced. When men stand at the altar the present dissolves, the messengers of the Lord appear, and the worshiper enjoys the blessing of Heaven.

Why does Christian work move slowly? Because of stony hearts. We are so far from the altar that no incense kindles, no angel appears, and there are no troubled hearts like Zacharias and Elisabeth. "Draw nigh unto me, and I will draw nigh unto you," was Jehovah's plea with Israel. There is a profound pathos in Christ's pleading: "O Jerusalem, . . . how oft would I . . . , but ye would not!" "Come unto me, ye weary and burdened, and rest."

Men will never find much in their Christian service until they are willing to go to the inner sanctuary, spread the incense, and spend time in watching it kindle. Then our hearts will reach up to God, and human experience will be transformed by his messengers. The presence of this angelic messenger troubled this aged priest. In the days of Eli it is said: "There was no open vision." The tragedy of this century is that men are in danger of losing their power to see the things of God. Such a condition ought to trouble them and drive them into the incense-chamber. Lack of vision wrought anarchy in Israel; will it do less for us?

II

No great movement is possible without sponsors. There would never have been a Reformation without Luther, Calvin and Huss. There would never have been an American Revolution without Washington, Jefferson and Henry. When a great need obtains, great minds have to meet it; where a great wrong exists, great minds have to redress it. There would never have been a Christian Church without the great men who came before John and Jesus, than whom there were none greater than Zacharias.

Great men, like great movements, must have great parents. That was a simple home in southern Palestine. It had none of the luxuries of Jerusalem, Capernaum or Antioch, but it was a *priest's* home in which presided one of the daughters of Aaron; the father and mother "righteous before God . . . and blameless." Clean living and high thinking; simplicity of home and godliness of life; peaceful hills and green pastures; reverence for God and his word—these are some of the elements which produce great men. Here was where John

the Baptist was born. From this sturdy parentage he inherited his strength of mind and body, strength that made him easily the greatest preacher since the days of Elijah. Knowing his parentage, we are not surprised at his fearlessness when he called the sensual, ease-loving, hypocritical aristocracy of Jerusalem a "generation of vipers," or when he was bold enough to rebuke the licentious Antipas for his adulterous marriage and "for all the evil things which Herod had done." Could a son of such parentage do otherwise? When he preached with such fire and abandon in the Jordan valley, it was the blood of generations of priests crying against the shameful corruptions of that age—every age. He was fulfilling the angel's prophecy to Zacharias: "He shall go before his face in the spirit and power of Elijah . . . to make ready for the Lord a people prepared for him."

God uses men who are prepared. There were about fifty priests on duty every day, but, out of all the twenty-four courses, Zacharias is the only one mentioned. Some men go about the Christian ministry most perfunctorily. With them it is a business, a duty, a living. Their hearts never kindle

and they never see the angel at the altar. Is not the sermon worthy of "terrible toil," of "agonizing in the study," before it is offered to the people? The unpardonable sin of much of the modern preaching is bringing two grains of wheat in the two bushels of chaff. Will God honor such service? Will men have respect thereto? The Kingdom must have men who are cumulative, who stand foursquare; men who are Boanerges ("sons of thunder"); men who can use their power against wrong. Christ's Kingdom must have men of iron and hickory, men of self-control and concentration. Thank God there are such men, thousands of them.

In the construction of concrete-work, there is a period when the mass is soft and pliable and a baby's finger makes an impression. It will take any form, any mold. But it soon hardens and resists the heavy blows of the hammer. Opportunities are the molding fingers which shape our destiny; they are given for a purpose, for some day—in an instant it may be—great burdens and tremendous stress will be placed upon us and action demanded. When that crucial and decisive hour comes, will

we have a *product*, or simply a hardened mass of worthless material? What did our Master mean by the parable of the talents, if not something of this kind? Use what the Lord has given you against the day of reckoning. Men will never become great servants by proxy. Serve in your humble place, but serve so well that when the Lord comes he will find you ready.

III

Turn for a moment to the hymn of this aged priest. Here, again, is the characteristic poetry of the bards of Israel, without meter, without rhyme, yet filled with passion. Zacharias was lifted out of his present and exulted in the redemption of his people. His tongue, long dumb, broke forth with: "Blessed be the Lord, the God of Israel." For a millennium the descendants of Jacob had been waiting for the "oath which he swore unto Abraham our father that we . . . should serve him without fear," and now the time was ripe, and the fruitage was about to fall. "The first evidence of his dumbness was that his tongue refused to speak the benediction to the people; the first evidence of his restored power was

that he spoke the benediction of God in a rapturous burst of praise and thanksgiving."

It is as if he stood before a splendid harp and laid his hands gently on its simple chords; then, coupling a poet's imagination and inspiration with the wizardry of an artist's fingers, he mounts upward, wire singing to wire, chord answering chord, until the whole gamut thrills and vibrates with the hallelujah in his rejoicing heart. The most sublime heights of the soul are his, likewise the resounding depths of boundless love; until at last man and instrument are one and cry out in one triumphant hosanna:

"Because of the tender mercy of our God,
Whereby the dayspring from on high shall visit us,
To shine upon them that sit in darkness and in the
shadow of death;
To guide our feet in the way of peace."

O thou God of Zacharias, when the fulfillment of our cherished hopes seems impossible, and the "darkness that is deeper" gathers round our whitened heads, grant us the grace of this aged priest, who did not murmur, who never grew blind to the opening flowers, nor deaf to the song of the lark. We are grateful for the

men whom thou dost prepare in thine own way, men whom thou dost bring forth to meet the crises when others have fled. Thou dost preserve among us the aristocracy of heaven, men of great spirit and abounding life, priestly men, with hearts of prophets. Thus our faith in God is freshened and preserved.

V

JOHN THE BAPTIST: THE DENIAL OF SELF

(Luke 3: 1-20.)

JOHN the Baptist! What a thrill in that name! Every man in his order—the prophets, John, and the apostles. John stood just outside the Christian era, and without his work there would have been a decided limp in the purposes of Jehovah. It is almost daring to attempt a description of his character, or even an analysis of the things that made him great. The fact is that John was overwhelmed in the Spirit of God; it filled him, possessed him, and he forgot everything save that the Kingdom of God was at hand, that its glory already flushed the east.

Although we are separated from John by twenty centuries, there is a subtle magnetism about his character which, like Shasta or the Matterhorn, compels attention. He stands in time with a glory that

is peculiarly his. There are other peaks that rise as high, and each has its own grandeur—Moses, Elijah, Isaiah, Paul. If they were stars, we would exclaim: What a constellation! If rivers: What a system! If worlds: What a universe!

But how could John be otherwise with such parentage? Do not kings beget princes? He did not "happen"; the blood of fifteen centuries of priests ran in his veins, and there were none greater or more consecrated than the faithful Zacharias, of Abijah's course. For a millennium and a half his fathers had handled the holy things of Israel. They saw the Tabernacle built before Mt. Sinai, and their eyes beheld the cloud, symbolic of Jehovah's presence, overshadow it. A great company of them were present when the glory of the Lord filled the Temple on Mt. Moriah, and it was their hands that carried the ark into the sanctuary and placed it in position; their voices lifted the grand and holy chant that rang through the Temple courts and cloisters on that greatest day of Israel's history. They were among the captives who returned to repair and rebuild the Temple under Zerubbabel. For fifteen hundred years

they had voiced the liturgy of the Temple service. From the day Moses applied to Aaron's right ear, thumb and toe the blood of consecration, until Zacharias saw the angel on the right side of the altar, no feet but theirs had trod the Holy Place. Is it anything unusual that such an illustrious line should flower in such a character as John the Baptist?

I

Christianity is practically the only religion propagated by preaching. There were some great preachers during the Jewish age, they had no large place in its extension. The priest officiated at the altar, not in the pulpit. One or two of the great Oriental religions in these modern times have attempted the Christian method of propagation, with indifferent success. But John was nothing if not a preacher, and yet his camel's-hair clothing and wild-honey diet can not be imagined in "cultured" surroundings. He was a priestly ascetic, and it was not for him

"To walk the studious cloister's pale,
And love the high embowed roof,
With antique pillars massy-proof,
And storied windows richly dight
Casting a dim religious light."

On the contrary, he fits into the out-of-doors, the same as the Master who followed him. He drew the multitudes into the wilderness where the scarred faces of the hills, together with the rocks and chasms, made a fit setting for the rugged message he had to deliver. Many went thither in search of the novel and the exciting, but, instead of a thrill, they were met by a rapier-thrust so keen that even the king trembled.

But it was not the wild scenery along the Jordan, nor yet the multitude that streamed out of Jerusalem to hear him, of which I am thinking; neither is it the great uninhabited stretches, the rocks and the scanty vegetation; but I am thinking of the world of men who are in an intellectual and spiritual wilderness, men who can not get their bearings. Ask a simple question about "life," "soul," "duty," "immortality," and you are not long in discovering that they believe black is white; they babble like children, and there is a pathos in their confident ignorance. Men get down to basic things in law and medicine because they are compelled to, or be rejected. They reduce their calling to a science, and work by approved formulæ. But in matters of

greatest import they skim the surface with a shallow mediocrity that is at once amusing and pathetic. Strangely enough, those who are the most ignorant of the teachings of Jesus and of philosophical Christianity are the most dogmatic in their beliefs, for it is they who apply the epithets "narrow" and "bigot" most freely. Pope's line, slightly changed, might apply: "A little religion is a dangerous thing."

John found Israel in the wilderness, spiritually. True, they were religious, if tithing mint-beds is being religious. But is there any spirit in that? John had other ideas. He called the aristocrats a "generation of vipers," and Jesus, a few months later, called them "whited sepulchres." As vipers they hissed at John, and as sepulchres they frequently exposed the moral rottenness within.

Our century has plenty of religion, if counting beads and making faces at a painted devil is religion. If religion consists in folding manicured hands over fat bellies and sleeping through the sermon, we are religious. But if religion means lightening the loads of the poor; if it consists in making the rich sinner (or saint) pay just

and equal taxes; if religion means checking and destroying the liquor traffic and saving our boys and girls; if it means making graft and bribery unpopular and unsafe; if it means the application of the Golden Rule, and giving every man a square deal—why, then, we are not so very religious after all, and we are still in the wilderness.

We have possessed such remarkable eyesight that we have penetrated the depths of eternity to come, and have located every bush, brook and flower in the heaven of heavens, sometimes going so far as to stake out our claim. By anticipation we have lain under the shade of the trees of heaven when we should have been at work on earth; we have been so intent on splashing about in the river of life and walking on the streets of gold that we have failed to see the pinched faces of the children that pass our doors daily, nor have we heard their cry for bread. It is a great comfort to be ready for heaven and waiting for the summons, but we may miss the angels unless we have a care.

When Scipio conquered the Carthaginians the Romans called him "Africanus"; Attila was called "The Scourge of God,"

and Bismarck, "The Iron Duke." But the very unique title given John is "A Voice." A voice is without dimensions, either in quality or quantity; it refuses to yield to the tape-line or the quart-measure. It is true that musicians speak of the voice as if it had extensivity, but their terms are purely arbitrary. They speak of the *color* of the tone; they say a voice is *heavy* or *light*, *white* or *dark*, *round* or *thin*. John may or may not have had a musical voice, but it is certain his voice carried power and conviction; it carried accusation to those who were living careless, indifferent lives; the voice of the wilderness preacher stung them until they saw their wickedness, and no class was exempt. The scribe and the Pharisee, with all their pride of ancestry, were there, yet John's words pierced their hearts like the shafts from a bow. At the other extreme of the social ladder were the publicans, the most cordially hated class in all Palestine, yet they came to him for advice.

But the most striking company in all that Jordan multitude was the soldiery of Rome. John showed his ability as a preacher when he awakened both extremes

of the Jewish people, yet we are not so much amazed at it because they had a common ancestry, a common religion and a common hope. When he penetrated the shell of their indifference he found there a *Jewish* soul; but what must have been the force of his words, the magnetism of his voice and the strength of his gospel that brought the soldiers to him, asking: "And what shall we do?" They were the representatives of the ruling power, a world-wide power, a power that looked upon the Jew as a narrow bigot and a religious fanatic. But that "voice in the wilderness" cast a spell upon all that heard it.

"Make ready." This is a constructive term and looks forward. In a splendid sense it is one of the great keywords of the Scriptures; it represents the heart of the teaching of Jesus, for did he not come to prepare men? The figure of the construction of the highway for the visiting monarch is too well known to be discussed; but there is the vision of the heart in which there are the hills of pride and selfishness, hearts cut through with sloughs of low desires, hearts from which rise the fetid odors of passion gone mad. Make

ready the highway, cut down the hills,
exalt the valleys; thy King cometh!

II

Absinthe, opium and alcohol have their peculiar power over the user, but none is more subtle, more dangerous, than popularity. What will a man not give to obtain it? For it men attempt what they are not, and end in disgrace. John met the same temptation. Later Israel had one character around which its national life revolved; he became a fixed part of their national consciousness—the Messiah. From the very beginning that idea gradually unfolded itself. The sorrows of the captivity gave it greater impulse; hence the prophets of the decline and servitude sang vigorously of a Deliverer who moved under such majestic titles as “Mighty God,” “Prince of Peace.” And when the Roman crushed his iron heel down upon the already sorely afflicted Jew, his desire for the immediate manifestation of his Messiah increased a hundred-fold.

So it is not strange that the Jewish leaders sent a deputation to John asking who he was, for they hoped that he might

be their Deliverer. It was an opportunity for John to gain favor at once. Could he not command these stones to be made loaves and eat the sweet bread of popularity? But John was not that kind of a man; he knew such favor at best could be but short-lived. So "he confessed, and denied not."

The Jews had an idea, also, that Elijah was to revisit them. He had wrought wonders among their fathers and had been taken from the earth in a chariot of fire. Elijah and John had so much in common that the people throughout Jerusalem and Judea said: "Elijah hath returned." That was also an easy road to popularity—"Elijah's double." But John was too big for that.

Centuries had passed since the voice of a prophet had been heard in Israel, and they were expecting one to appear. If John were not the Messiah nor Elijah, then certainly he was "that prophet." If he pretended to be the Messiah, that subterfuge would soon be shattered; if he posed as the reincarnated Elijah, he might be unmasked; but is there any human way in which they could have proved that he was not "that prophet"? Under that guise he

would have been safe. But John was not in the world to gain the acclaim of a fickle populace. To-day they shout "Hosanna!"; to-morrow, "Crucify!" He was simply the "voice in the wilderness."

There was an artist who painted a magnificent picture of "The Last Supper," but he made the cup in the hand of Christ so beautiful that men admired it rather than the face of Jesus above it. Seeing his mistake, the artist drew his brush through the cup, saying he would have nothing detract from the glory of his Lord and Master. So John sought to eliminate every element of his personality, reducing himself to nothing but "a voice in the wilderness." What a lesson for our self-seeking age, an age when men are studying every trick and art of self-exaltation. "Whosoever humbleth himself shall be exalted."

On human grounds John's action can not be accounted for. A man in search of self-advancement would have chosen one of the three alternatives: Messiah, Elijah or prophet. Two were comparatively safe; one carried some hazard, but history abounds in examples of men who have played their lives against more desperate

odds than that. Sometimes they won; more often they lost. If John had been moved by an ordinary ambition, he would have taken the chance. But he was conscious of a great mission; he was to speak the prologue of the great drama. He knew somewhere among the millions of Israel was One mightier, and that he would appear in due season. Hence John had no time for horn-blowing and feather-preening; he was the messenger of Jehovah. Hard hearts must be broken, hills leveled, valleys exalted; the crooked ways straightened; the King was at the door.

There is the call to every heart, but the noise of the world frequently drowns it; yet as we answer we soar to the skies, as we neglect we grovel. Was John poor? Perhaps. But what poverty of understanding we betray when we use our physical eyes to measure spiritual values. They were made for color and form, but the infra-red and the ultra-violet quite escape. Our ears were made for harmony, but neither eye nor ear can catch the color and concord of things spiritual; it is only by that sixth sense—faith—that they are discerned. John dwelt in that higher atmos-

phere, caring nothing of what others thought of him; he knew his own valuation.

III

Curiosity did not get the better of that wilderness preacher. He had no time to spend in idle search for Jesus; it was of more consequence to be ready when he met him. John knew his day was short; therefore he crowded a tremendous amount of work into it. In those six months he burned enough energy to supply an ordinary mortal a decade. There was an intensity about his preaching that startled even the ease-loving, sensual Herod, and aroused the tigress in his wife. John's career was cut short in the midst of his usefulness, and he was thrust into prison; but not until he had baptized the young Galilean whose work began when John's closed.

Was John's life a failure? All that we know of it is contained in a very fragmentary account covering about six months. There is no record that he ever preached in Jerusalem, or that he ever saw the city. After a brief half-year in the wilderness he was seized and executed. Thus does

JESUS CHRIST IN HUMAN EXPERIENCE

the world treat its heroes. It is said that Abraham can be traced through Palestine by his altars; so the progress of justice, liberty and righteousness can be tracked across the centuries by the stake, the cross, the rack and the arena. But such are the lives that illuminate succeeding ages; they hearten the multitudes that bear the world onward toward God's ideal. We need and must have the men who do not care for rank or title or lineage; yet they must be men of humility who gladly say of the Lord: "He must increase, but I must decrease; I am unworthy to unloose the thong of his sandal."

O God, there are so many wonderful things in this revelation of thyself to us that our souls are bewildered. Thy Holy Spirit hath breathed its power upon these great men, and they have burned themselves out before the dull, uncomprehending eyes of this world; yet to every question they have answered: "Look for One greater."

Forbid that we should become puffed up over the petty honors men would place on our shoulders, but aid us to keep our station in life humbly and without osten-

tation, believing that at the great marriage-feast of the Lamb thou wilt say to those who have toiled: "Come up higher." Life can not be called a failure when it is used ever so humbly to glorify the name of thy holy Son, whose power shall never wane, and whose Kingdom shall never end.

VI

NICODEMUS: ARISTOCRAT

(John 3: 1-5.)

THERE have been a great many uncomplimentary things said about Nicodemus. Aside from Mary Magdalene, he has been the most slandered character in the New Testament. He has been accused of dodging into the "side entrance"; he has been consigned to Hades simply because he talked with Jesus after dark. Men ought not to pass judgment until they have the facts, and *facts* they do not have in this case; simply the statement: "He came to Jesus by night." Christ "knew what was in man," and, if Nicodemus had been a coward, Christ would not have passed it by without comment. Here is rather a great heart in search of truth. He was a man of intellect as well as spirit, and in these Jesus touched his experience and opened up to him the possibilities of a re-born life.

I

The enemies of Jesus have said a great many harsh and unkind things about him, but they have never accused him of cowardice. He always met them squarely, and often to their extreme discomfort. At the first Passover after the beginning of his ministry, he faced what was, to him, a very aggravating condition—a portion of the Temple had been converted into a merchandising department. If the space were not actually needed to accommodate the throngs of Israel, at least it should have been without the lowing of bulls, the bleating of sheep and the shouts of the money-changers. Jesus did not stop to remonstrate or argue; he perfectly understood that type of his countrymen. They had to be driven, for there was no argument that outweighed the half-shekel. There was doubtless much muttering about “precedent,” “license,” “rights,” and there may have been covert threats of violence, but they dared not resist his authority; they went!

Abuses burn in the hearts of good men, yet few have both the courage and the ability to redress great wrongs. Nicodemus

had seen the "signs" Jesus had done in those early days; he had seen the holy flash in the keen eye of the young Galilean as he drove the cattle from the sacred enclosure; he had heard the blistering command: "Take these things hence; make not my Father's house a house of merchandise." During those first few weeks Jesus had stirred up more sentiment, favorable and otherwise, than Jerusalem had known since the days of the prophets.

It is refreshing to find a man who cuts directly across precedents of centuries standing, a man with a personality strong enough to rip through our hidebound social customs and overturn our doll-houses. We so easily fossilize—ossify. It is a wholesome thing for society to gasp—gasp twice—as Jerusalem did when Jesus began his Temple reform.

Thoughtful men find in Jesus a fact to be reckoned with. By this is not meant simply the historical fact of Jesus. That there was such a man living at the time, and in the place the Scriptures designate, is universally admitted. During the three years of his earthly ministry Jesus Christ created a universe of which he is the center.

After his departure, four men in different places gathered out of their memories such of his teaching as they recalled. Later, other men, by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, added to what had already been written. These writings are gathered into one volume, and Jesus is the subject. The New Testament can not be imagined without him, so thoroughly does he pervade it and his Spirit saturate it. It is this "whole" that demands explanation, as every thinking man will admit.

The keen eye of Nicodemus saw at once that Jesus was unlike any man of that age, unlike any man that had ever thrilled Israel since Moses or Samuel or the prophets, and he was frank enough to admit it in his first sentence: "We know thou art a teacher come from God." Men have borne the same testimony throughout the centuries since; they could not do otherwise and leave Jesus a shred of respectability. He was what he claimed to be, or else he was the rawest counterfeit.

If a man has never seen the ocean, you can not impress him very much by telling him of it, no matter what your command of language or your power of

description. But some morning lead him out on a high promontory overlooking that wild waste of waters; let him see the great combers which pound the rocks with the boom of thunder; let him catch a whiff of the brine, and watch the wind-whipped spray, and hear the wild cry of the sea-gulls speeding over the foam-crested waves; let him gaze right and left, and turn his glass to the sky-line, where there is nothing but riotous, seething waves, fighting, hissing, smashing—then he will begin to awaken to the grandeur of the sea. Likewise, language fails to convey the meaning when a description of Christ is attempted; he must be seen by the soul to be appreciated. But some are so busy fishing in a gallon bucket that they never think of the sea. The question, "What think ye of Christ?" must be answered. Jesus is here; his system is here; he claims to be the Son of God, and his system claims to be the way of life. Every man who digs an inch below the surface will investigate very carefully before passing final judgment. But investigation means work; hence, our beliefs are as they are, not necessarily because they are true, but because they are "orthodox"!

Truth has always gone the way of the cross and the stake before men would accept it.

These signs demand explanation. Nicodemus was not an ignorant, unlettered man; he was a "man of the Pharisees," a "ruler of the Jews." Jesus had at his command certain phenomena which the thoughtful Nicodemus termed "signs." The Greek term means "miracles by which God authenticates men sent by him, or by which men prove the cause they are representing is God's." The question, then, is: Was Nicodemus intellectually qualified to pass sound judgment on the works of Jesus? If so, then why discredit him and accept Josephus or Tacitus or Pliny? Does simply the fact that they were *writers* entitle them to more consideration? If a United States Senator has never written a volume, his testimony is just as valuable in court as the testimony of another who has a dozen volumes to his credit. Nicodemus was a member of the Sanhedrin, the Jewish Senate. His testimony is thus: "No man can do the things you are doing without the intervention of divine power." The Sanhedrin was a religious court, and a member

of it ought to be able to pass sound judgment on religious phenomena, as Munsterberg, or Titchener, or Baldwin, is qualified to pass upon things psychological.

It is quite the modern custom to dismiss these "signs" by saying that that was an age when men knew little or nothing of the simplest scientific laws. He who uses that statement so glibly might learn something to his advantage were he to consult any volume of history dealing with that age. Every college and university has a Greek and Latin course—languages that reached perfection centuries before the Christian era. Twenty-five hundred years hence, will the literature of the twentieth century be the model in the institutions of learning? We pat ourselves on the back as the only people who ever knew anything. Should we maintain that attitude consistently, we will have to cast aside a great many things other than the miracles of Jesus. It is easier and far less difficult to accept the statements of the Gospel writers at their face value. Explanations involve in a hopeless web of contradictions from which there is no escape. The Scriptures call Jesus the Son of God. Admit that fact, and

what hinders the miracles? But to admit that he is the Son of God is to admit sin—and guilt—and condemnation.

Nicodemus reasoned correctly; there is but one conclusion: "No man can do these signs except God be with him." Christ said: "I and the Father are one." If God created all things at the beginning, could he not change the form of an infinitesimal portion of them when he was on earth? The difficulty is that men fail to identify Christ as God; they try to crowd him into a teacup; they "pooh-pooh" at what they can not understand, yet they can not understand the function of their own minds.

"He who through vast immensity can pierce,
See worlds on worlds compose one universe;
Observe how system into system runs,
What other planets circle other suns;
What varied beings people every star—
May tell why God has made us as we are."

II

Men miss Jesus because of his simplicity. Naaman nearly missed health because he was expecting complicated treatment from the prophet. Dip in Jordan—is that all? "I thought he would come out, and stand, and call on the name of his

God, and wave his hand over the place." But doing a simple thing saved him.

The Jews expected their Messiah to be helmet-crowned and saber-girded; they expected him to wear a coat of mail and speak with the trumpet of brass; they expected legions to spring up when he smote the earth; they expected him to be accompanied by the rattle of chariots and the staccato of hoofs. Power and deliverance were the two words he must personify. But they were doomed to disappointment. Instead of a burnished helm, he wore a crown of thorns; instead of a saber, they thrust a reed into his hands; instead of riding on a wide-nostriled stallion, he came meek and lowly, sitting upon an ass; instead of a coat of mail, a seamless tunic; instead of the sharp, ringing command that brought thousands to their feet, he calmly announced: "My kingdom is not of this world."

Men have always looked for a Messiah that fitted *their* conceptions—intellectual, social, philosophical—rather than the one who said: "I am meek and lowly in heart." Ever since the first century the scholastic world has had Jesus under the microscope. Every jot and tittle of his teaching has

been split and quarter-sawed by men who are wise above what has been written. They have made the Master teach what he never intended to teach, and say things adverse and foreign to his mission. They discover—or think they discover—in his teaching germs of this or that school of thought. There is depth to his doctrine, but it is not the kind that robs a man of his common sense, for Jesus was pre-eminently practical, and this is where many miss him. Said he to the sinful woman: "Sin no more." The parable of the good Samaritan forever settles the question of "neighbor." Zacchæus saw the meaning of the Christ when he said: "The half of my goods I give to the poor; and where I have been extortionate, I restore fourfold." And yet Christ is the teacher of the sublimest philosophy of all: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and thy neighbor as thyself."

Nicodemus made the mistake commonly made by men to-day; he tried to explain the new birth on intellectual grounds. When men face the supernatural, the inexplicable, their query, tinged with the hopelessness of doubt, is: "How can these things be?"

Nicodemus stumbled at the idea of the new birth, and, in seeking to explain it on natural grounds, made it both grotesque and impossible, as well as missing the greatness and beauty of the idea Jesus had just expressed. When men seek to explain Christianity as a purely intellectual phenomenon, by that very act they show they have not grasped either the intent or the content of the Saviour's mission.

Our bodies live and move and have their being in a world subject to physical laws, but there is another world in which the spirit of man lives and moves, a world over which the physical has no control and into which it can not enter. The laws of the one have no more influence in the other than chemistry has in the domain of psychology. Earthly things, earthly laws; spiritual things, spiritual laws. If men insist on looking at spiritual things from an earthly viewpoint, they must of necessity ask: "How can these things be?" We can not explain heavenly things by earthly standards.

III

Here Jesus turned the attention of this scholarly Jew to one of the great facts in

their national history, for at one time they had been saved from extinction by an uplifted brazen serpent. Not that there was any virtue in that brass replica of the reptile that had wrought such damage in Israel, but its image prefigured the great Cure that would some day be uplifted in Jerusalem, not only for Israel's hurt, but for all nations. Somehow, looking upon that curious emblem, the poison lost its effect upon the sufferer, and somehow it has pleased God to heal the world through his Son. The deadly virus of sin has poisoned every fiber of the soul, just as the burning poison from the serpent's fang swept through the bodies of the fathers of Israel. Looking at the brazen serpent, their bodies were healed. Christ heals that which is more difficult—the soul, which has no corporeal existence, yet which is as real as time and space.

In this connection may arise the question of the atonement, a thing repudiated by many as incompatible with divine love. We are informed that the idea of God laying the sins of the world on the shoulders of an innocent person is repugnant to our fundamental ideas of justice and right.

And so it is. But this probably arises from the fact that such persons overlook the fact that *Jesus Christ is God*. If a physician, seeking to discover the remedy for leprosy, gives himself to a leper colony, and in due time contracts the disease and dies, there is nothing in it incompatible with our ideas of right and justice; on the contrary, we applaud the heroism that led him to die for his fellow-men. His life was his own and he had the right to use it as he saw best. Jesus Christ is God, and, looking upon the race of men, concluded that by giving his life he could bring them back to the Father and to himself. His life was his own, and he had the right to use it as he saw fit. There is nothing repugnant about that; rather, we applaud the heroism that would lead even a God to die, if necessary, to save the race. Hence Jesus Christ allowed himself to be lifted up on the cross for the salvation of men. He said no man could take his life from him; he had power to lay it down and he had power to take it up.

This is a heavenly thing and can not be understood from an earthly standpoint. To the Jew it was a stumbling-block; to

the Greek, foolishness; but to us that are saved it is the power of God.

O God, here is one of those rare souls to whom the Christ makes his powerful appeal. We pray that our judgment may always be tempered with wisdom, and that we, as Nicodemus, may go in search of those deeper mysteries of Christian experience. We thank thee for the vitalizing Holy Spirit, by whose instrumentality we are "born again"; who creates within us that sublime confidence, and constrains our hearts to say: "We know thou art a teacher sent from God." Let thy Spirit teach us that the things of the flesh profit nothing, but that he that is "born anew" shall possess the life that cometh from thee—life everlasting.

VII

A SOUL'S AWAKENING

(John 4: 1-42.)

THIS conversation unfolded truth as well as beauty, enthralling, stimulating, kindling. The present mission of the woman at the well was absorbed in another infinitely more important. Jesus was no idle talker, neither did he remain silent when a representative of the traditional enemy of his country was near. Here were hidden possibilities, though hardened by a false life. Contact with Jesus broke the crust, and she was soon thrilling with a new life. She came a hostile, indifferent sinner; she left a blazing evangel, crying: "Come, see a man!"

John had the touch of a literary artist. Lights and shadows are set opposite in startling effect. His third chapter deals with an aristocrat, a Pharisee. Purple and fine linen are so close that they can almost be touched; there is the perfectly modulated

voice of the man who never allowed himself to become excited, nor caught off guard; there is the courtly dignity of "the ruler of the Jews"; there is the studied poise and accent of the scholar—and there is Jesus. But when the fourth chapter opens, the other extreme of society is opposite the Master. A woman of the *Samaritans*, an outcast, a drawer of water.

I

We are quick to catch the viewpoint of those in our own class, but it is difficult to see the outer rim where the down-and-outs are. They have been battered beyond the pale of decency, and when we meet them we wag our heads philosophically, saying: "It takes all kinds to make a world." Possibly; but is it not equally true that the world makes all kinds, among whom are the Jean Valjeans on the outer bounds? The contemptuous slur slung at Jesus was: "He receiveth publicans and sinners, and eateth with them." That damned him with the fat-brained aristocracy. They wanted him on their own little pedestal, where they could wine him and dine him and lionize him, while the great, hungry multitude

peered through the grating. But when they thought they had him all to themselves, he called Levi the publican to be one of his chosen circle; he said to the sinful woman who bathed his feet with penitent tears: "Thy sins are forgiven."

To-day nearly all the goods on the market bear a trademark. If it does not bear "our brand," it is notoriously counterfeit and its manufacturers the worst frauds out of jail. Men have tried to "trade-mark" Jesus; they have tried to make him "Papist," or "Anglican," or "Calvinist"; but Jesus bears no man's brand. His command is: "Follow *me*." His gospel is for the world. If he never did anything else than show the solidarity of the race, its interdependence, his mission was a success.

The woman of Samaria stands as a type of social outlaws; a class into whose lives—their *real* lives—the world seldom gets a glimpse. Occasionally they meet a personality who has a genius for friendship, whose subtle influence draws from them the story of an unequal struggle and unfair advantages. Jesus discovered to the world that no man's heart is wholly bad. It is as a harp; sin may rust and corrode and

even snap some of the strings, so that it may no longer produce its full-toned harmony. But there are always enough strings left which, when struck by a sympathetic hand, will vibrate to the praise of God. Men want to be righteous, but an inflexible social law often forces them beyond their depth. Conscience stiffens and the heart hardens, but the hunger for God is never appeased until the soul rests securely in him.

There is a pathos in this narrative. The Jews and the Samaritans were geographical neighbors, and more—they were bound by the ties of blood, yet their hatred of each other has passed into a proverb; even the sick and helpless received no attention from the other faction. The fountain of human sympathy had dried up completely. But this incident shows that hatred is superficial, and that there are great possibilities even in the most degraded; that there is a latent reservoir in every heart, no matter how tightly locked by sin.

Literally, the twentieth century needs *voice culture* as well as heart culture. We speak in soft words to our equals and superiors, but it is easy to mix iron and

wormwood when addressing the under tenth. If we will learn to put some of the softness of May instead of the iciness of December into our conversation, we may unseal many a frozen heart and let the Lord Jesus in. Just such men have blessed the world, plucked, as they were, brands from the burning. There was Levi the publican; and Saul was consenting unto Stephen's death, and he voted against the Christians when they came before the Sanhedrin for trial. The modern church has its myriad examples. The great sinners usually make great Christians.

II

It is an artistic thing to make a friend out of a man who, even before he has met you, is your avowed enemy. Here is where Jesus showed his genius, and it is interesting to note how he did it. The fact that he, a Jew, should speak to her, a Samaritaness, took her by surprise so completely that she clean forgot the ancient quarrel between the two nations. Astonished, she asks: "How is it that thou, being a Jew, askest drink of me, who am a woman of Samaria?"

"How is it?" Is not this the question of all thoughtful men? After examining the mission of Jesus—his eternal and undying love for men who cared not for themselves nor their Creator—their meditative query, tinged with surprise, has always been: "How is it?" How is it that heaven bended to earth and gave its King to bless an alien race who mocked him, thorn-crowned him, spat upon him, scourged him, crucified him? How is it that he said: "Father, forgive them; they know not what they do"? Was not the whole life of our Lord a series of most remarkable surprises, beginning with his birth until the time when he was taken up? It is the exemplification of the most amazing grace that ever fell on the stony heart of man. When his murderers nailed him to the cross he excused their dastardly deed on the grounds of ignorance. Surprise? It has brought ten thousand men to a sudden stop more quickly than the burning bush before Moses. Our hands are all the same color—red, the evidence of guilt—yet his voice pleads gently: "Wash you, and make you clean."

Before she had time to recover, Jesus

followed with another striking sentence: "If thou but knewest." It suggested that she was missing something worth while, and, if she possessed it, all necessity of coming to the well would be obviated. And who would not make inquiry? Jesus had spoken of something that concerned her, and his sentence implied that he had power to transmit to her that blessing.

"If thou knewest"—ignorance. Like sheep without a shepherd men go their way, the way that promises pleasure. There has been an enormous growth in the amusement business since the perfection of the motion picture. Amusement parks, cheap theaters, automobiles, Sunday excursions and such have crowded the spiritual out of men's lives, and when death and calamity visit them they have nothing upon which to lean. Every pastor called to the bedside of the dying witnesses over and over again the hurried preparations for death, and is sick at heart. No thought of God until the tongue begins to stiffen and the eye to set. They have never known the gift of God. And the pathos of it all is that the friends who stood at that bedside and saw it all will continue to go about the streets—away

from God. "Turn ye! turn ye! why will ye die?"

There has been a great deal spoken and written about the church in this century. Some of it comes from those whose knowledge of the church is decidedly limited, to say the least. A series of such articles recently appeared in a certain popular weekly. The author showed that his knowledge of church business—his subject—was about as extensive as mine is of Choctaw. Had he visited a few live churches he might have found material for a real article. Men who view the church from the streets, literally and figuratively, should not seek to be her instructor. She is not an entertainer, not a promoter of athletics, not a literary society. On the contrary, she was given a spiritual message and commissioned to a spiritual task. If the community in which she is situated has no healthful recreation, then let her see to it that it is furnished; ordinarily there are other agencies, but she ought to be able to establish a censorship and say what the children shall and shall not see. There are other things aside from nudity that should be taken out of the motion picture.

There is too much killing, too many strained and unnatural scenes.

The church, first and last, ministers to the souls of men. "But," we are informed, "they will not come to the churches." Here is where the church should manifest her power. Is it too much to ask that all places of amusement be closed on the Lord's Day?

There are some good Christians who expect the preacher to be so magnetic in presence, so fertile in plans and so strong in ability that he will *compel* the people to come to the house of the Lord. The secret of the failure to win is that the churches are not playing ball back of their preachers. Give any preacher the proper support and he will count on the scoreboard. The world is missing Christianity because of an inactive church.

III

Of all the rich imagery of the Holy Scriptures there is none quite so vivid and restful as the water pictures. The first Psalm likens the righteous man to a tree planted by rivers of water. The Hebrew shepherd led his flocks beside the still

waters, the waters of rest. By the waters of Babylon the Hebrew captives sat down and wept. Palestine was not a well-watered country; it had its wet seasons and dry. The water was conserved in cisterns prepared for that purpose; living water was a luxury. Naturally, few subjects could be more interesting to a Palestinian. It is not strange, therefore, that Jesus should apply to himself the title "water of life," for what figure could more aptly describe what he was to the race?

In the Middle Western portion of the United States are those wide stretches of semi-desert. About the only vegetation they support is cactus and soapweed, and there is no animal life save the horned toad and a wandering jack-rabbit. But at intervals there are streams of water of varying volume. The Government has sought out sites and is building dams to conserve the water supply. Then, as it is needed, it is turned out over those arid wastes, and then the flowers spring up and wide stretches of green fields and trees—life in abundance. "Living water." And who has not seen hundreds of lives barren of any righteousness suddenly become en-

riched by an unknown and hidden source of strength? They have found this "water of life." "It shall be within him a well of water springing up unto eternal life." The Holy Spirit imparts it; man is connected with God; God is within him. It is a spring *leaping* up in rich abundance and going forth to the noblest fulfillment. It was this spring of water leaping with life in the heart of Paul that overflowed on Asia Minor and the Greek and Italian Peninsulas, leaving that growth of sturdy green along their shores. It was this water springing up in the hearts of the Reformers that blessed Germany, England and Scotland with a new civilization, and it came with its fresh and vigorous tide to American shores. It is the water of life in the hearts of a multitude of men and women that preserves our nation from the forces of destruction, because there is still a class who are exerting all their strength to rob the Church of her rights and power, and are using every subterfuge to nullify her influence. Eternal life is not attained in some far-off future period, but is an immediate result—God-given. The soul in which living water flows has eternal life.

O God, talk with us by the well-curb of life, that we may open the channels through our waste and arid hearts and send the sweetening floods surging over them. Bid the desert blossom and the thirsty land to become a pool, reflecting in its crystal depths the trees and rushes on its banks, where the children of men may rest and gain strength. And from the richness of that abundant supply send the healing tide forward among them, that we may be one of those streams in the desert that make life's weary ones rejoice.

VIII

THE NOBLEMAN: DRAWN OR DRIVEN

(John 4:46-54.)

THE home country! Instantly the mind flashes back across the years and hovers over a spot the memory of which is as dear as life and as precious as love. That spot may be in the British Isles, or on the vine-clad hills of France, or on the sunny plains of Italy. More likely it is in America; but, wherever it is, its memory is your dearest possession.

I recall a long, straight road, the ditch by its side, the golden images playing over the pebbles in its shallow depths. I remember the tall, graceful elms, the smooth-trunked beeches, the sturdy oak and the rough hickory which stood in the woods hard by. After a quarter of a century I can still hear the notes of the thrush and the bobolink as they made melody in the cool shadows of the forest. There still lingers the odor of Mayflowers, of bursting

buds, of damp moss; the orchard, the meadow, the fresh breeze. I can see the tiger-lilies and the raspberry-bushes that grew along the fences. I remember the dim, grass-grown path, and how I followed it until it was lost in the woodland. I can still hear the faint tinkle of the cowbells, and am conscious of the growing darkness and the fear that rises in a boy's heart when the cows are not yet home! I can hear the schoolbell ring—a peculiar note which I have never discovered in any other bell. I remember the day my mother took me in her arms and gave me her blessing, and we said "Good-by." The memory of it all lingers like incense in a holy place.

We can not return to the scenes of the past, save over that dim, enchanted pathway of recollection. If in body we go back to those scenes, they are all so sadly changed; the stranger is everywhere. We greet him under the name of the chum of boyhood; we fished together, romped together, tramped the woods together, but he is a stranger now. We have grown away from them; the years have made their unalterable changes. There is one sweet thought: we are growing toward our

Father's house, the soul's everlasting home.

Jesus had returned to his childhood home; he had come back to Galilee.

I

It is remarkable how quickly a man's viewpoint changes. Self-centered, pleasure-bent, business-enthralled, until calamity or illness threaten, then how quickly he sees something else.

"There was a certain king's officer"—probably an underling of Herod Antipas. The Herodian family was famous throughout the world as rulers, and any one who held an office under their *regime* was also possessed with a certain distinction and dignity. Clothed in the official uniform and bearing the insignia of his office, he was one of the dignitaries of that famous dynasty.

But Sickness regards not the gold-laced uniform, nor the marble-tiled floors, nor the silken draperies of the rich. He slides past the granite pillars and through the golden doorway of the wealthy as easily as through the broken panes of the poor. He as boldly accosts the aristocrat as the beggar at his gate. He blows his breath

alike into the face of the prince and the child of the pauper. He is no respecter of persons. "Dignity" struts the street and men fawn before him and kiss their hands to him, but Disease hath neither ear to hear, nor eye to see, nor heart to regard, nor conscience to accuse.

What pathos in the appeal: "Come down ere my son die." Are you a father and have you a son? Do you not catch the terrible tug and strain in those last four words: "Ere my son die"? "My son;" a father's hopes were languishing with fever. He was not concerned in the least about the dignity of his position; one great desire possessed him.

Capernaum was on the shores of Galilee. It was the chief city of northern Palestine, the center of government and therefore of importance. Cities of size get the habit of looking rather condescendingly upon the humbler towns and villages. Capernaum was the city; Nazareth was the town. Galileans, as a whole, did not bear a very good reputation. They were crude and uncultured; the classic Hebrew abode not in them. Instead, they spoke a rough, coarse dialect, and they were in

contact with the Gentiles. They were to the Jews what the Bœotians were to the Athenians. True, Capernaum was in Galilee, but Capernaum was a city! The "king's officer" was from Capernaum, and Jesus was from Nazareth. Had not Nathanael already voiced the popular opinion: "Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?"? How strong, therefore, must have been the prejudice of this influential Herodian officer against seeking aid of this itinerant Galilean preacher.

If Jesus came in personal contact with men to-day, many might call him a "sensationalist," an "incendiary," or maybe "anarchist." Theologians would call his teaching unsafe, heterodox, and accuse him of heresy. They would brand his miracles as tricks of an impostor. How do we know? Because that is the way the "leaders" have always treated the benefactors of the race. One generation crucifies; the next canonizes. It is easy to hold such prejudices so long as health and prosperity continue; neither is it difficult to poke fun and sneer at the beliefs of others. Those mockers at Pentecost who said, "These men are full of new wine," were not the first and certainly not

the last to jeer at a faith which was to them impossible.

But alas for our prejudice! It too often bars the door and shuts us away from the chambers of blessing, yet none of us are entirely free from it. Those loudest in their protestations of "breadth" and "liberality of view" are usually the most intolerant. Prejudice is a fiend from the netherworld. He bears a subtle poison not intended primarily for the ear and tongue, but for the sight, and through it he affects the whole sensibilities. He "sets on fire the wheel of nature," until the ear hears falsely and the tongue speaks perverse things. One drop of it in the eye and the ocean is no longer green, but red. Under its devilish alchemy the crystalline whiteness of truth fades into the dunnest gray; the straight becomes crooked, and the most sincere righteousness tintured with sinister motives.

But a great need has a wonderfully neutralizing power upon it. When the certain death of his son stared him in the face this nobleman forgot his dignified office, forgot his prejudices, forgot that Jesus was a Galilean, a Nazarene, forgot what men

might say. What cared he for public comment if his son were only saved? He probably knew of the miracle at Cana, and there may have reached him some tidings of the signs done in Jerusalem, hence he reasoned: "Cannot this man who changed the water into wine, and who cleansed the temple, make my son whole?" "Come down ere my son die."

Calamity does another thing; it punctures pride. Calamity and self-esteem can not ride in the same vehicle. This man said nothing to Jesus about being a king's officer. There was no letter of introduction, no formality, no red tape; he went straight to the point; he cared for nothing else. And, after all, our social standing, our R. G. Dun rating, the amount of stocks and bonds we own, or the amount of money we are able to borrow on our signature, does not count very much with the Lord. In his hands are all the corners of the earth; all men appear before him on the same level. Jesus Christ died for our sins because we needed him; let us, therefore, be humble and come to him for his blessing and help.

II

He came to Jesus as the last resort; he waited until the "child was at the point of death." He probably tried the physicians in Capernaum, the best of them; but the child grew worse, and death was rapidly approaching. He sought Jesus as the last resort.

For two thousand years human nature has run along in the same old groove. Men wring the last drop of sweetness out of every pleasure; they pursue their commercial activities until nothing remains but the dried pods of threescore and ten selfish years; they ride on the Icarian wings of fame until the last feather falls, and then they turn to Jesus because "the child is at the point of death." He who sells for a mess of earth's pottage the service due to Christ and his fellow-men is worse than the "meanest man" the newspapers have yet discovered.

When one reads of that early company of enthusiastic believers in Jesus Christ, and how they started out to proclaim life through his name, he will stop and dream of the glorious history the Church might

have had if she had kept the primitive faith. What a thrilling volume Church history would have been, were it simply the record of the expanding Kingdom instead of the quarrels between bishops and emperors. One does not read very far until he is aware that "Satan came also." Division has robbed the Church of her strength, and, instead of pages that glow with the Spirit's power, there is the shameless record of strife and hatred. It is to the shame of the Church that she has not Christianized the world during these twenty centuries. "My son lieth at the point of death;" the world is sick. Ten thousand remedies have been applied, but the spiritual pulse flutters, the tongue is coated, the breath is foul. She has not poured in the oil and wine, nor has she bound up the wounds of humanity whom sin has assaulted and robbed and left to die. And she never will until she reunites her severed body, gathers her children under one banner, and moves as a solid army. At present she is using too much of her strength to run her machinery, instead of converting the world to Christ. Wise men are seeing this and are pleading for a united Church, that the

Church may save herself in order that she may save the world. The Church is therefore coming to Christ as the last resort. She has been to Rome and Constantinople; she has been to Wittenberg and Geneva; let us hope that she is on her final and triumphant journey to Jerusalem. Pray God we soon arrive!

There are many men to whom the possession of authority is more intoxicating than absinthe. It puffs them up in their own estimation until they think they are the flywheel of all creation, and, were they to withdraw, the universe would perish and "leave not a wrack behind." Jesus was the only being that ever trod this earth in whom all power dwelt. We are helpless, finite beings, and can not change one hair from black to white. God is all in all, and when misfortune and calamity overtake us we realize how small we are and how great is our dependence upon him.

It is a sad commentary upon human intelligence that men have to be driven to Christ by the rod of affliction—men who boast of their superior understanding. Like the little bird in the story who balanced himself on the edge of the nest day after

day and boastfully declared what he would do, until one luckless day he overbalanced and the cat seized him. Before he was rescued he had a broken wing, and when the other nestlings flew he was left behind.

“But man, proud man,
Drest in a little brief authority,
Most ignorant of what he's most assured,
His glassy essence, like an angry ape,
Plays such fantastic tricks before high heaven
As makes the angels weep.”

III

“Except ye see signs and wonders, ye will not believe.” Archbishop Trench concludes that this petitioner was driven to Jesus by the constraint of an outward need rather than drawn by the inner necessities and desires of his soul.

Driven to Jesus! It may be that men get some good out of an enforced service, but certainly it is not an ideal relationship. Every pastor is forced to the conclusion that a great many men and women become Christians in much the same spirit as they take out fire insurance; they seem to think church membership is an assurance against loss. Hence they pay the smallest premium rate—no more. The fear of punishment

is the whip behind that drives them to Christ; they serve through fear, the basest of all motives. Were it removed, they would have little use for Christ or the Church. We may well question whether that is Christianity at all. Certainly it has none of the essential elements of the Master's teaching. The man who works for his country with a ball and chain attached to his leg and an armed guard over him can not be called a patriot, nor is he a Christian who serves through fear.

But there is that other motive. If fear of punishment drives some, there are others that are drawn to God through love. The two motives are at opposite poles. We will never have a strong Church so long as men serve God to keep out of hell-fire. Such a Church is a band of time-servers. The theology of the Middle Ages smoked with fire and sputtered with brimstone; it rang with the cries of the damned. The thunderbolts of the Almighty were aimed at the man who dared wear buttons on his waistcoat instead of hooks and eyes! People sat in their churches and shivered at the terror of the Lord. He was the greatest preacher whose language was the hottest.

They invented a devil as large as the Colossus of Rhodes, and made him

“Skelp and scaud poor dogs like me
And hear us squeel!”

There is a hell; it begins on earth, as does eternal life. Take the drug away from the drug fiend and you will witness tortures of the damned more vivid and awful than Dante ever dreamed of putting on paper, or Dore on canvas. Place such a man before the throne of God and he would still be in hell.

The joy of being a Christian is feeling that mystic and holy power of the love of Christ drawing us to him. He died for the world, for the freedom of men; died to give them life. We love him because he first loved us. Jesus never said either in words or in substance, “Come unto me or I will destroy you,” but he did say: “Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.”

Those Samaritans, whose land Jesus had just quitted, believed on him because of his words; they did not require a sign. True greatness of heart was theirs. Christianity is an attractive force; Jesus is a magnetic personality. Let the Church hold

out the stronger motive and not attempt to drive men into the Kingdom of love.

O eternal God, we thank thee for the tenderness of Jesus; that human relationships made a powerful appeal to him. He was never more himself than when standing by the open tomb of his friend, or by the side of the dead, or in the presence of the suffering. He has always been the Balm for our sorrows, and our Comforter when in distress. Let us, therefore, learn his two great words "love" and "rest." We pray that we shall not think too dearly of our earthly relationships nor mourn too deeply when they are broken, but, rather, that back of the physical eye and the human heart should be that mighty confidence in God and his blessed Son, whose salvation is unto the everlasting ages, where human relationships shall not only be renewed, but intensified and glorified.

IX

THE BORDER OF HIS GARMENT

(Mark 5 : 25-34.)

TRAGEDY! Can you place your hand anywhere on the social body and not be conscious of its convulsive sob? Tragedy is death's living self. It may dwell across the hall from your apartment, on the adjoining farm, in your own home. The poor, misshapen bodies that drag themselves about the streets, the still more misshapen intellects with scarce a semblance of mentality, the dead love in living bodies, the blasted hopes—all, all are tragedies; and what home is free from them? Every acquaintance is a paradox; you know him, and yet you are as ignorant of him as if the diameter of the earth were between you. You know well his comedies, because laughter will out; but not his tragedies, because sorrow is that ominous bird of night which seeks the silent chambers of the soul. Does your heart hold a tragedy?

Was this woman unfortunate? Yes. Are you sure? What would you give to know Christ as she knew him—twelve years? Had it not been for that long-standing infirmity, she would never have had thrice mention in the sacred narrative; nor would she have known the Lord. "Misfortune" may be God's way of spelling "blessing."

I

She was "healed of her plague." This was the greatest moment in the life of this woman. She had suffered much; she enjoys much. The ravages of the disease were stayed and she was a new creature physically.

And this is what Christ does spiritually for his followers; he heals them; he makes of them new creatures, which is a greater work than healing the body. To think that he takes these palsied souls, these sin-soaked and corroded hearts which have scarcely strength enough to reach out their hands and touch him; to think that he not only stops the ravages of sin, but that he renews our souls and makes them whole again—is past human comprehension. He

brings us at last before him perfect in soul and spirit, and this is more wonderful than to be whole in body. There are in every congregation scores of individuals who know this power and who walk among their fellows as splendid examples of men who have been healed of their plague.

But has not the social body suffered many things of many physicians? And is it in a way to be healed? Its afflictions are legion. It has bruises which need binding up, ulcers that need cleansing, abscesses that need the surgeon's lance. Society has yet to touch the border of Christ's garment. The Will is weak and the multitude dense. But what is the Will in society, that Will that thrusts men toward the Christ? Can it be other than the Church? Is there any other institution that is seeking to create an impulse toward the Christ? As part of the social body, this is the Church's mission and therefore her duty, and, if she fails to do it, she is in danger of being "spued out of his mouth." This century is placing the severest tests upon the Church that she has ever faced. She can not quiet the struggles of society by medieval potions, by Old World forms and ceremonies. She

must not attempt to restrain this mighty, pent-up force. It must find expression.

The last thing this century needs, and the last thing it will accept, is an ecclesiasticism. This is a bogey to frighten the innocent. This age wants to be healed of its plague—plague of narrowness and bigotry, plague of Catholic and Protestant priestcraft, plague of division, plague of churchianity. It refuses to be bound by any such. It insists on a religion that feeds the hunger in men's souls. Rosaries and crucifixes may have had a place in the ages before the Renaissance, but this century demands, above all things else, *freedom*. If the Church refuses to *give* it, men will *take* it. It is theirs by right. Any organization or institution that restricts mental and spiritual freedom is something quite different from the Christianity of Jesus. He binds upon them no fetters, or withholds from them no truth, but leads the way to its sublime heights.

II

There is no superstitious significance to be attached to the person of Jesus. Ten thousand people thronged him, yet none felt

the electric current flash out of his body save this unfortunate woman. When in any age, particularly ours, the battered and bruised, the heart-broken and the sorrowing, touch the Christ, his power is exerted in their behalf; for Jesus walks among the crowds of men to-day; they are all about him. Though men throng him, they get nothing from him because they come without purpose. They do not "ask," hence they do not "receive." To them Jesus is nothing more than a cunning trickster, an interesting teacher, a superenthusiastic reformer; they fail to sound in any way the depths of the mighty purpose that thrust him forth from the bosom of the Father. They are cynical; they call for a sign. Blind fools! would they know a sign were one given them? Are there not signs in abundance all about us? In every blade of grass that struggles upward, in every leaf that flutters in the summer breeze, in every glistening star, in every beating heart; but, having eyes, they see not; minds, yet they do not comprehend. The Master taught that there is a class like unto grunting swine; before them cast no pearls.

So of all this multitude that surged

about Him none save this woman were blessed. There was the big tradesman from Capernaum who rubbed shoulders with Jesus as they walked; there was the priest and the Levite, the scribe and the Pharisee, who brushed his garments, yet no power went forth from him. But when this woman, who knew her only chance of health was passing, touched one of the tassels of his garment, soundness came to her immediately.

I have thought that the poor and lowly come into more vital contact with Jesus Christ than those in more comfortable circumstances. Wealth enjoys the glow of its own fireside, the comfort of its own dwelling; it enjoys a smug satisfaction in all that it possesses. The scholar digs into the musty lore of the past and is never so happy as when, lens in hand, he is scrutinizing a faded manuscript, searching for missing jots and tittles; but he is in grave danger of becoming absorbed in the mechanics of religion rather than catching the spirit of Christ. But the man of humble position is not interested in the grammatical construction of the text; it is sufficient for him as it is, and by his flickering lamp in his

meagerly furnished room he touches, without barrier, the border of His garment and is renewed in heart and soul.

That this woman was healed is a wonderful thing, but it is even more wonderful that Jesus knew that "power proceeding from him had gone forth." How close Christ stands to the heart-throbs of humanity, and how thoroughly he enters into its experiences. He loves individuals for their own sakes, and through them he would leaven the whole mass. Because we can not fathom the mysteries and solve the riddles of existence is no reason why we should doubt, or spend much time in asking "Why?" He who says, "My Father knows," and leaves the hard places to be explained on the other side of the grave, will avoid a great many dark hours and will be infinitely happier than he who refuses to cross the river because he does not understand the action of the gasoline motor.

III

There is something about the very name of Jesus that calls to the heart of the sufferer. It is like sweet balm to his

bruises and soothing oil to his wounds. Jesus! To know him brings luster to the eye and hope to the breast. Oh, why do men insist on looking at him through the dust and mists and cobwebs of twenty long centuries, when his magnificent personality is among us as fresh and vigorous as that morning he stood by the Sea of Galilee and said: "Children, have ye any meat?" He is nearer than breathing, nearer than hands and feet. Our knowledge of him must be something more than the dry facts the printed page conveys. If we will open the door, he will come in and *dwell* with us, bringing that wholesome light from which the demons flee and in which the messengers of God delight.

Who can not catch the last mighty tug of her will as she summoned her body to one final effort? Out of the embers of her dying self the new Phœnix struggled itself free, and hope blossomed red when the Saviour of the world drew near. By sheer force of will she drove her weakened body into the thoughtless throng at the risk of being trampled under their feet, for she had not the strength to battle against them, but death was preferable to the miserable

existence which had been hers. The rebuffs, the taunts, the remonstrances and even the insults of the multitude were nothing to her, for she had that sublime confidence in Him who was its central figure that he would not rebuke her, and that he somehow would help her.

And herein is revealed the mighty pathos of the incurable. Men clutch at life with such tenacity, and when disease begins its progress they fight it most bitterly. What remedies they seek! What physicians they employ! What beliefs they espouse! They want physical soundness; they want to be rid of the blight. Mark gives the old, old picture so familiar to every pastor and Christian worker. Note his words: "She had suffered many things of many physicians, and had spent all that she had, and was nothing bettered, but rather grew worse." That unceasing round which the sufferer makes to the allopath, the homeopath, the osteopath, until she "had spent all that she had." The prodigal son spent all his substance in the pursuit of pleasure; this woman spent hers in search of health.

Did you ever know any one who did

not have a remedy for any disease, or who did not know the very physician "you ought to see"? Any one will tell you exactly what to do, *and the invalid does it!* He goes from "regulars" to "quacks," from "quacks" to "patent medicines," and from "patent medicines" to the grave. It is pathetic, this search for a remedy.

But there is something more pathetic. Men are driven into a panic when their bodies are attacked, but they are not in the least alarmed when sin is consuming their souls. If they are tubercular, they will mortgage their homes, sacrifice their property and flee to the Southwest; but they will be absent from the house of God months at a time, they will neglect the reading of their Bibles, they will allow the most trivial things to keep them from doing their Christian duties, and yet not be in the least uneasy about it. They will spend all their "living" upon their sick bodies, but not a dollar, not an hour, upon their sick souls. This was the condition that wrenched these pathetic words from the lips of Jesus: "Ye will not come to me that ye may have life."

O God, our souls are famished and our

spiritual vitality low. Urge our wills into activity that we may touch thy blessed Son—even the fringes of his garment. The weary years have dragged themselves past and we have spent our energy, our living, upon other things and are nothing benefited. In thee all power dwelleth. Baptize with thy radiant Spirit our poor, corroded souls, that we may be whole again and glorify thy holy name.

X

THE TRAGEDY OF OPPORTUNITY

(Mark 10: 17-22.)

IF there was a tragedy in the life of that woman who for twelve years had been so greatly afflicted, what is this which Mark here records? It is a terrible thing when the body is unable to perform its functions—when a healthy mind is compelled to sojourn in a tabernacle wholly inadequate for the burdens placed upon it. But it is a great deal more serious when the body is strong and the mind lacks the necessary power to grasp a great opportunity and move into the promised land. There is the old story of the man who trapped monkeys by boring a hole in a small cask which he filled partially full of sugar. The hole was large enough for the monkey to slip his hand through, but he could not withdraw it after he had tightened on a handful of sugar, and he was too greedy to let go. So with men: they get their

hands full of earthly things, the seemingly sweet things, and when a greater opportunity comes they can not grasp it without first letting go, and this they find very difficult to do.

It has been urged by some that it is an easy thing to follow Jesus Christ. The great Master never said so, nor did any of his disciples. On the contrary, he taught precisely the opposite: that his followers would make foes of their own households; that they would be called to leave homes, houses and lands; that a man must deny himself and take up his cross daily. There are many who think they are following Christ when they are simply in the rabble that throngs him. When he gives them a hard saying they depart, for, like Demas, they love the present world. Christ taught that his way is strait and narrow, and this young man was honest enough not to attempt what he felt he could not perform.

I

How refreshing is youth! It has yet to feel the cold rock that bars its progress, or crushes the life out of those upon whom it chances to fall; it has not yet seen the

smile of the sophisticated nor heard the retort of the cynical; neither has it met that despicable person who accepts responsibility and refuses to perform its functions. Youth sees only a clear sky; youth has superlative confidence in its own ability; youth has never even heard that there may be lions in the way. Would God we might always be youthful! But a few years among the crafty sons of Belial teach even a righteous man not only not to spread his pearls before swine, but to proceed before swine as if he had no pearls.

Mark lifts the curtain on one of those quiet mornings in the life of Jesus as he went out into the public highway. He had scarcely reached the gate when this enthusiastic young man came running unto him. He had doubtless heard Jesus teach upon many occasions, and, after pondering it in his clean young mind, felt that Christ's appeal was irresistible. He wanted to have within him that life of which Jesus talked.

This is what any young man will find if he will get away from the current notions men have of the Man of Galilee. If he will study what Jesus really said, instead of getting his ideas from the enemies of

Christianity, or even what a large number of preachers have to say about Jesus, he will find his enthusiasm rapidly welling up. Get the sincere milk of the Word before it is put through any patent process!

If he did not see the divine Christ, certainly he saw the human Jesus and had respect unto him as a great Teacher; he kneeled unto him. What are the questions young men are usually asking? Modernize this incident, and what would be the natural thing to expect from the lips of this young man? The major part of our educational institutions are teaching their students to be efficient money-makers. It is only in the last few years that these institutions have given any attention to the altruistic, the philanthropic. Sociology is one of the very latest sciences to find a place in the curriculum, and even yet it is an elective in nearly all colleges. They insist on trigonometry, calculus and the like, but they do not insist upon their graduates knowing something of their duty to the great world in which they are to live and from which they are to gain their living. It may be that after the men get out and come in contact with the sores, physical and mental, of men, they

will be led to attempt something in their behalf. But how many college-trained men have done this? Their training is at fault. It would be far better to work out the equation of *Smith plus Jones* than the *square of a plus b!*

It was not advice on how to become a more successful business man, or how to get the maximum pleasure out of life, that interested this young man. He asked about "eternal life," a very unusual question, but he was an unusual young man. There was light in his face and expectancy in his query, and it is easily understood why, when Jesus looked upon him, He loved him.

II

This young man had fulfilled his religious duty and, measured by the common standards, he was a religious man. Jesus enumerated six of the commandments, and the young man immediately replied that he had observed them from youth. Will you find one more punctual in his religious duties than he? The Church and the majority of its clergy see in this the sum total of religion. But these things are only the threads which compose the basis of the

social fabric. The world does not *want*, nor does it *need*, more formal religion; it has too much already! The Greek word for religion is a heathen term and means primarily "fear of the gods." The English word is a Latin derivative and means "binding." So far as we know, Jesus never used the term "religion." He did not teach men to be "bound"; he taught them to be "free." He did not teach "religion"; he taught "expression." He directed life; he did not suppress or constrict it.

I have an idea that Jesus mentioned these commandments as a test to see how far this young man had thought into the problem which was the genesis of his question. "Young man, here is the religion of your fathers; is not that sufficient?" But he craved the opportunity of expression; he did not want to feel the negative walling him in at every turn; he craved life. For over fifteen hundred years Judaism had not changed either in form or in spirit, save as circumstances made it necessary (as, for example, by the introduction of synagogue worship); it was practically the same in the time of Jesus as in the days of Moses. Small wonder it is that Christ

urged the futility of pouring new wine into old bottles. Christianity does not consist in keeping days, observing forms and following rules. The "rules" of the Church are not always the "rules" of Jesus.

Men do not get much pleasure out of doing don'ts. Red-blooded men want something that expresses manhood. No young man ever asks a football coach: "What shall I not do?" Youth is not built that way; it wants a chance to express itself.

But every pastor knows that the majority of his people are satisfied if they are not doing anything bad. The whole basis of their life is wrong (satisfied in idleness), and, if they think they are God's children, they were never further from the truth. This is the popular conception of religion, but it is not the meaning of Christianity. The price is too great, and, even though the opportunity is before them, they can not enter the door; some from unbelief, more from sheer laziness!

When the Master stood in the presence of the afflicted woman he was in the presence of enforced idleness, but here he is in the presence of physical beauty and perfection. This young man had not the

calloused palm of the toiler, nor yet the coarse garb of the laborer. On the contrary, he had wealth and social distinction; he was one of the very few of that class who came to Jesus during his earthly ministry. It is no wonder our Lord saw in him possible material for an apostle.

The very condition into which he had been born carried with it tremendous opportunity. He had wealth and it must be used wisely; he had youth, a life to spend; he had social prestige, and that gave him entrance into the lives of other fine young men; he was devout, and there was a splendid pathway before him. Success was his simply for the asking. He "ran" to Jesus; but "he went away sorrowful." His countenance fell, the light faded out of his eager eyes, and his heart was saddened, for Jesus proposed a thing that has turned thousands from him. Men's religion has been a selfish thing to be enjoyed with a friend or two, like a fine meal in a cosy alcove of a high-class restaurant. "Young man, are you serious in your question; do you really desire eternal life? Then, note the condition."

III

And this is what the world has overlooked: "His duty to society." But why talk of society? Is not that one of the hackneyed subjects? Perhaps, but "disease" is a hackneyed subject also. Jesus did not give him a parcel of generalizations which mouthed well, but meant nothing, neither did he moralize and lament over the condition of the poor, nor did he pay high-sounding compliments to this young man because he had property. But he said: If you are in earnest, there is one thing for you to do: sell what you have, give it to the poor, and follow me. He had asked to do something that he might have eternal life, and Jesus named the cost; but look what he was invited to do! Again let me ask: "Is it easy to follow Christ?" It is far easier to be *religious*; hence the majority prefer to be *religious* rather than *Christian*. Christianity and religion are not necessarily synonymous terms. A man may burn a candle now and then, sprinkle a quart or two of holy water, make long prayers, insist upon the traditional interpretation of certain texts, say "Amen" with much unction

and fervor, and pass as religious; but being a Christian is not in pious looks. It is giving a cup of cold water in the name of a disciple. A man can not be a Christian and let his neighbor alone.

I take it that Jesus had no intention of pronouncing against wealth, but rather against anything that hinders a man from doing his duty to his fellow-man. This incident is only typical; a man may allow his occupation to keep him from his duty to society. But note the thing Jesus proposed: "Sell what you have." If he were literally to follow Jesus, he could not be encumbered with property interests; his attention must not be divided. If he were in Galilee, he could not have his mind in Jerusalem. He could not occupy a place among Christ's followers unless he were willing to surrender all.

It is interesting to note how Christ proposed that the young man dispose of his wealth. Some have said: "Deed it to me." And so have the religious fakers of all ages urged their followers to give their property into their hands, but Jesus asks nothing for himself. "Give it to the poor." This was a staggering blow. It were bad

enough to convert it all into cash, but to *give* it to the poor! Why not give it to his relatives? Why not build a public library in his city, or buy a public park and call it by his name? That would perpetuate his memory as a philanthropist. It was beginning to be clear to him that "following Jesus" had a much deeper significance than he had dreamed. Eternal life! He longed for it, yet the lure of the temporal was greater than he could overcome. But who had more need of assistance than the poor in those days of unorganized philanthropy? Did he not have an opportunity to begin to practice at once what was the very core of the teaching of Jesus?

"Come, follow me." Having divested himself of all distracting things and having shown that he was in sympathy with the mission of Jesus, he would be ready for the company of that most remarkable group of men the world has ever known, but "he went away"; he could not pay the price. The words of Jesus in another place apply here: "Behold, I set before you a door opened." He was not big enough to enter, and that is the tragedy of it. "What might have been!" "Come, follow me;"

but the allurements of this earthly life were too strong; he could not break them; "he went away."

Good Teacher, we have heard thy voice and have been moved toward thee and the eternal life which thou offerest. There is the charm of thy holy presence which has drawn us with eager steps, and reverently we kneel to thee. But the distracting things, the entangling things, are so bound about us that when we would be free from them they bind us the more closely. Call thou to our consciences and bid our spirits awake, that we may not be held by temporal things when eternal realities call us. Teach us that *thy* religion is *expression*—loving God and serving men and seeing thee in everything.

XI

BARTIMEUS: LIGHT THROUGH DARK- NESS

(Mark 10:46-52.)

When I consider how my light is spent
Ere half my days, in this dark world and wide;
And that one talent which is death to hide,
Lodged with me useless, though my soul more bent
To serve therewith my Maker, and present
My true account, lest he returning chide;
Doth God exact day-labour, light denied,
I fondly ask? But Patience, to prevent
That murmur, soon replies, God doth not need
Either man's work or his own gifts; who best
Bear his mild yoke, they serve him best: his state
Is kingly: thousands at his bidding speed,
And post o'er land and ocean without rest;
They also serve who only stand and wait.

—Milton.

BLIND! Can you imagine it? And
blind in an age when there were no
institutions to care for those dwelling in
darkness. Note the pathos Mark puts into
the sentence: "*Bartimæus, a blind beggar,*
was sitting by the wayside." The beggar

in possession of all his faculties does not cause us serious discomfort, but the appeal of the sightless ones goes to the heart. Be it said to the credit of our country that it has provided handsomely for these unfortunates. It educates and cares for them. But for Bartimæus there was nothing but long days of waiting, listening to tramping feet, catching snatches of news from passing caravans, clamoring for a few farthings to sustain his useless life.

It is not strange, therefore, that his appeal brought Jesus to a standstill. Did any one ever enjoy light more than he? He is the world's ideal poet; form, color and beauty thrilled him. There was magic in the silvery sheen of Galilee; the green-carpeted hills drew him often to their expansive breasts after the roar of the day had died into the silence of the night. Under the quiet skies, with only the stars for companions, Jesus spent many hours in meditation and prayer.

He heard the cry of men as they wandered in the darkness; it came to his heart far more pathetically and a hundred-fold more appealingly than the importunities of Bartimæus by the Jericho gate.

I

Once more "a great multitude." The greatest season in the Jewish calendar was on—the Passover. Jerusalem awoke from a city sleeping on the hills of Zion and Moriah into a living organism, and, drawing in its breath, brought within its walls, from every quarter of the globe, the sons of Abraham, and every Jew felt the pull.

There is a melancholy interest attached to the events of this narrative. Christ had visited Galilee for the last time, and the Peræan ministry was closed. Jerusalem was before him, not as it had been so many times in the past, but now as the place where he was to fulfill his mission in the world.

On his way down from Galilee Jesus had gone over into Peræa, crossing the Jordan again at Jericho. Outside the city a blind beggar heard the tread of feet and, with characteristic alertness, knew some one extraordinary was passing. "And when he heard it was Jesus the Nazarene, he began to cry out and say, Jesus, thou son of David, have mercy on me." How thoroughly the knowledge of Jesus had perme-

ated Palestine. Not only did the rulers know him, but also the beggars by the wayside. And from the importunate pleadings of Bartimæus it would seem that they understood him better than the aristocrats. They had heard of what Jesus had been doing, and they believed he could do the same for them if he were but to pass their way.

Bartimæus addressed Jesus as "the son of David"; that meant "Messiah." The strange thing is that the beggar should perceive in him the Christ, while those who had been with him should "rebuke him that he should hold his peace." Eyes had they, but they saw not. They were willing to enjoy the charm of his presence and the loaves from his hands, yet when even a beggar called him the Messiah their lips straightway voiced a rebuke. But that is typical of the multitude; they enjoy the benefits of Christian civilization—liberty, freedom of speech and all such—yet when these things are ascribed to the Man of Galilee, then: "Hold your peace." And why? Why not give Jesus the open honor? Is it not his? Fatal folly! Willful blindness! Have we gained our peaceful homes,

our noble institutions, our great literature, in our own strength? Jesus is written in it and over it and through it, so large that the blind by the Jericho highway recognize him, yet the high priest from Jerusalem expurgates his blessed name from everything. Would you? *Do* you?

The demand for silence only stirred the blind to more strenuous appeals: "He cried out the more a great deal." Again and again, clamorously, loudly, insistently, as you would have done, he cried: "Thou son of David, have mercy on me."

A great need is never silenced by rebuke.

There is something wrong with our industrial relationships when there are "blind men" by the "wayside," for every man has the right to "eyesight." There is something wrong with that *system* or that *institution* which thrusts out from itself such amazing heaps of human wreckage. Instead of demands for silence, let there be a thousand tongues to plead against this deep damnation. When men see their brothers reduced to wayside beggary, then they should begin to question the holdings in their own hands.

"Call ye him," said Jesus. "Ye"—who? Those with Him; his disciples, probably. Look at those three words. How mighty the Christian world became—in doctrine. What ponderous volumes stand on our shelves—volumes on "Institutes," "Introductions," "Systems," "Plans of Salvation." Their covers are written over with "Lord, Lord," but their pages are full of bondage. Christian men have fought with barbaric fury for the mark which decided whether a letter was *Omicron* or *Theta*, but where have they fought for a chance to *call* Bartimæus to Jesus, even though he be by the wayside begging? A mark has been more than a man, a dot more than duty.

Tell me, ye who haggle over baptisms, ceremonies and interpretations, what it means to "have mercy and not sacrifice." Shall we save *men* or rescue *dogma*? Our disputes are so loud and our anger so hot that we can not hear Bartimæus, who in his darkness cries: "Have mercy." I am not so much concerned about doctrines any more. If a man believes that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, that should be sufficient. Why starve to emaciation on watered doc-

trines and pale-blue milk? Should I meet another casting out demons in His name, far be it from me to forbid him, lest he be a more consistent disciple than I.

II

Every man has a chief desire which shapes his destiny. Even the most casual reader recognizes at once that Bartimæus was not asking for gold. And, strangely enough, neither he nor Jesus had said anything about sight restoration. But never had his cry been so earnest, so importunate; a crisis had come.

Are you daring enough to take a pencil and write out your chief desires? No, no; not for other eyes—just for your own. And when you have done so, dare you spend an hour in thought with that sheet before you? Where do your chief desires center? In the physical, mental or spiritual? Are you quite sure of the motive which, like a throbbing engine somewhere down in the mysterious depths, is thrusting you forward? Men are likely to build largely upon the physical because it is tangible, and least upon the spiritual. That order should be reversed, because the spiritual is the

greatest of all. There is too much at stake to "guess and fear."

Bartimæus desired to be loosed from the seat of beggary by the roadside; he wanted to be loosed from the life of nothingness which he had been compelled to live all these years; he wanted a place among men; he wanted to care for himself.

There is a certain class of people in every city who seem to enjoy their hand-to-mouth existence. This were serious enough were they the only ones concerned, but they marry and children come to share their miserable existence. Why is poverty? If a man prefers it, then there is something wrong with him and he needs attention; if society forces it upon him, then society is at serious fault and needs readjustment. We have little trouble in explaining the poverty of India and China, but we are blind to the thousands of America who are undernourished and poorly housed. Famine and flood do not enter into our poverty problem, neither do undeveloped resources, though exploited natural resources may have a very great deal to do with it. Concentration of population enters into it. May God bless the "back to the soil" movements.

It is there the race will recover its sight. We can not live and work in buildings raised to the *n*th story and expect to be keen of vision. Men must have the wide expanse of fields and the unsmoked sky, for they were made for the open. When they descend into the dim canyons whose walls are the twenty-five stories of the modern city buildings, they may expect to become like cellar plants—colorless and puny.

III

Jesus said something about eyes that see not; perhaps he meant us. We pride ourselves on our keenness of vision, when perhaps we should be heeding the warning and advice given to the Laodicean church: "I counsel thee to buy of me . . . eyesalve to anoint thine eyes, that thou mayest see." We have no trouble in seeing heresy in the other fellow, but "thou that abhorrest idols, dost *thou* commit sacrilege?"

We sit by the wayside and listen to the voices of Jewish pilgrims going to Jerusalem to worship as they have done for a thousand years; they are *our kind* of pilgrims. But one day a different sound is detected above the murmur of the multi-

tude; a stranger is there. His beasts are not Palestinian asses, but horses and camels, and his servants speak another tongue. Immediately: "Who is he?" "What right?" "What business has *he* in Jerusalem?" "Treason!"

May not a man reach Jerusalem on a horse's back as well as striding an ass, though that be the favorite beast of the *orthodox*? Must he come in by the Jericho gate? May God deal gently with the men who have the courage to get out of the beaten path; they are more wholesome for the thinking world than a "wilderness of monkeys." Every great man, including the Master himself, has been out of the beaten path.

"Jesus, thou son of David, have mercy upon me." Men see in Christ everything else save Messiahship. They admire his parables and delight in his poetic temperament, but fail to grasp the true import of his mission. When as Messiah he touches our experiences, all our darkness flees away and light floods our souls.

Jesus, thou from Nazareth, by life's wayside we wait for the tread of thy holy feet. So long the night has been upon our

souls, so deep the darkness that has encompassed us. A thousand feet and the murmur of innumerable voices have gone by us, and rumors from all the earth have come to our ears; but when thou comest, the hush of thy divine presence falleth upon all the throng. "O son of David, have mercy on us!" We would see—see thee and the great Father of all; we would see men as our brethren, and we would see our pathway, for it is the way thy blessed feet have trod.

XII

JESUS AND THE TAX COLLECTOR

(Luke 19: 1-10.)

THE Romans farmed out their taxes, that is, they sold the revenue privileges to certain men for a consideration, and everything collected over that amount went to the publican. That system led to much extortion and was exceedingly unpopular with the masses. For a Jew to become a *publican* meant disfranchisement and social ostracism. But to some the call of the shekel was stronger than blood and country; it was bankable, while social standing bore no interest!

Throughout the Gospels there are two words which usually travel together—"publicans" and "sinners." When the Pharisees wished to speak particularly contemptuously of Jesus they accused him of friendship with publicans and sinners; "this man receiveth sinners and eateth with them." In turn Jesus said: "The publicans and the

harlots go into the kingdom of God before you." Possibly Jesus enjoyed their company because they were *human*; certainly there was no hypocrisy or artificiality about them. If the inside of the cup and platter were smeared and soiled, the outside made no apologies; they were the same all the way through, and this could not be said of the accusers of Christ. The Pharisee with his pious veneer, the lawyer with his technicalities, the scribe with his jots and tittles—all laid their burdens upon the people. They were wolves in sheep's clothing, devourers of widows' houses, extortioners. Jesus had penetrated their sham, and they knew it; hence they hated him. He preferred sincerity, even among the publicans and harlots, rather than the hypocrisy of the spiritual leaders (?) of Israel. To him religion was to be carried into the real-estate business, into the collector's office; it was not to be left in the chief seats of the synagogue.

Luke shows most delightfully in this incident how Jesus touches the experience of the average business man, and how that man responds.

I

The Gospel narrators do not lead their readers through the dreary deserts of abstraction, but rather through the habitations of men, where things are happening. They take us to the marriage of the king's son and to the grave of Lazarus; from the stormy waves of Galilee to the quiet well in Samaria; from the peaceful hills of the north to the crowded courts of the Temple in the Holy City. Real characters walk through their paragraphs, and every page thrills with life—from the sparrow to the king. Some sections may seem dark and difficult, but these are the deep wells which are never dipped dry; they are the challenges to men to lengthen their ropes and enlarge their buckets, for somewhere down in the unsounded depths is the copious flow of living water.

Zacchæus was no ordinary man. If it is true that familiarity breeds contempt, then possibly we have mistaken the *names* on the sacred page for the *individuals* themselves. We speak of Moses and Isaiah and Paul and Zacchæus and Pontius Pilate as if they had been our schoolmates. We

know their names far better than we know them. Many of the names on the Gospel pages stand for great leaders. We speak of Zacchæus as if he collected cheap insurance among the colored people. He was no petty official; he was the "chief publican," and to hold that position meant that he must have ability. You will note that the most serious complaint that is lodged against him was the business he was in; "he was a publican." But he was capable of grasping very quickly the meaning of things spiritual.

Zacchæus had been doing business according to the accepted standards of his time. If he had done anything wrong (and he expressed himself as ignorant of it), then the system under which he worked was at fault, and not he. A fairly careful study of the Gospel narratives will fail to reveal where the leaders of Israel ever lodged formal complaint with the Latin Government for the system which was corrupting the lives of many of Israel's choicest men. Israel simply ostracized the publican and was silent as to the system. And *we*—we demand the "scalp" of a grafting patrolman, and let his chief go free. We "get"

the petty politician, but send his "boss" to Congress! Our efforts at reform are usually backwards; we snip off a few twigs instead of digging up the roots. We pass a private drinking-cup law, but wink at the social rottenness which makes the cup necessary. The average reformer is like a geyser—four hundred feet up in the air and scalding hot, or four hundred feet out of sight and doing nothing. Some preachers and a number of their members want an evangelist to hold a meeting that will scorch the town. When that is done, some one afterwards has to handle the burnt logs! The steady pull seldom suffers from relapse. Our age calls for intelligent analyses and equally intelligent action in treating the hurt. Neither freezing nor blistering will heal. The Pharisees had tried both on Zacchæus; they froze him out of society and blistered him with their epithets. Men want to be healed, not excoriated.

This is the second time in our study that a rich man has stood in the presence of Jesus. Whereas the rich young ruler boasted that he had kept the commandments, Zacchæus was a silent onlooker; the former ran to Jesus, the latter ran on before, seek-

ing a place where he might see Jesus; the rich young ruler went away sorrowful, but to Zacchæus Jesus said: "To-day is salvation come to this house." Riches neither made nor unmade Zacchæus. The basis of his splendid character was there before he had collected a denarius, and the accumulation of gold had not corroded it.

Why should a rich publican be an outcast? Who had separated him from the commonwealth of Israel and denied him fellowship with the Jewish church? This same Pharisaical sect which sets itself up as judge in our modern society, both in and out of the Church. They hand the rich young ruler a palm, but give Zacchæus a scourge; they give the one a fish, the other a scorpion.

II

The rich young ruler had no hesitancy in running to Jesus with his question, but Zacchæus was not so bold; the best he hoped for was simply a glimpse of Jesus. Who can tell the longings in the hearts of the social outcasts—longings to see the Christ? Occasionally one makes his way back from the "far country," telling not only

of his own hungers, but of the tremendous famine in that land. Men want to see Jesus, but they are in their own sight as grasshoppers. So felt Moses and Gideon and Paul. Yet a man must empty himself of all self-sufficiency if he would be used of the Holy Spirit. If any man will be wise, he must first become a fool.

And how many have failed to see Jesus because of the *crowd*! Who has not watched, to his soul's consternation and terror, the marshaling of the black army of Doubt, and who has not felt its assaults upon his soul?

"Our doubts are traitors,
And make us lose the good we oft might win
By fearing to attempt."

Is it Doubt and a company of grave sins, some of them tall and gray-haired, signifying age; others fair and rotund, signifying vigor and health—do these shut out your view of the Lord? Run away from the crowd; get where it can not obstruct your view. Look for Jesus and you will see him, and *he will see you*.

Men usually get what they want, if they are willing to pay the price. Zacchæus had grown wealthy, and God knows he had

paid for it. When he came near the rulers of the nation, they gathered their robes about them and turned their backs to him, and one would imagine that Zacchæus saw that they "paid the rent"! When he appeared among any class of men, they snarled "Publican," and withdrew from him. Truly, he was "a man without a country." And he was neither the first nor the last to buy the pile of gold at such cost.

But if he was to see Jesus he would have to humble himself. Imagine a man of wealth and dignity climbing a tree like a small boy to view a parade! But Zacchæus was so sincere in his desire that he cared nothing about his pride; he did the undignified thing; he climbed a tree. It is not an infrequent thing to meet people who would like to "see Jesus" if it were not for making a public profession of their faith, or submitting to the ordinance of Christian baptism. Pride immediately swells up mountain high, and they get no glimpse of the face of the Nazareth Prophet.

III

Occasionally some modern scientist gives the world a volume of wonderful psycho-

logical experiences which he has verified and catalogued. But, after all, emotional experiences are quite beyond description. Words lack color; phrases are void of flexibility, and sentences often fail to convey anything more than the thought. But what must have been the sudden leap of Zacchæus' heart as he sat in that tree, hungry for a friend and not daring to express that hunger, when Jesus stopped and said: "Zacchæus, to-day I must abide at thy house." This was something thoroughly new in all his vast number of experiences. Men may have assaulted him, sworn at him, thrown javelins at him, lied about him, threatened him, but who before had ever honored him? And in this there could be no mistake; Christ was standing looking at him and calling his name.

It was Christ's democracy that called down upon him the curses of the aristocrats. If Jesus had sat within the silken draperies of the homes of the Pharisees and discussed whether a man should wear false teeth on the Sabbath because that involved bearing a burden, he would have been immensely popular with them; he would have been their kind. But the class distinctions men

had made never occurred to him, save as men needed help. It made little difference whether the hands of the wounded man by the wayside were soft or calloused, or whether his face was delicately lined or begrimed with soot; he had a tremendous interest in everything human. And when the Church follows his example she will find the attitude toward her very much changed.

But there is a dash of wormwood in the pleasant potion. There is that accursed undercurrent which is always present wherever good is. No matter what Jesus did, there were those warped and twisted sons of Belial who carped at him. "He is gone in to lodge with a man that is a sinner;" and that class, unfortunately, never has a funeral. Lying, dissembling hypocrites—thorns in the side of spiritual Israel. There have been more churches killed or crippled by the carpings of long-tongued women than by the direct action of the devil himself! Murmurers are the murderers of the Lord's work.

IV

Jesus changed the world for Zacchæus. Before, he saw men as representing so much

taxable property; now he beheld them as brothers. His first thought was what he had in his own hands. Come! see how a publican serves his God! "The half of my goods I give to the poor." Jesus Christ touched his experience, and touched it hard enough to reach his bank account. When a man begins immediately to talk about using his money for the good of society, who doubts his conversion? Where was the Pharisee who was able to stand by the side of Zacchæus now? We read of his prayers, his fringes and his phylacteries, but seldom of his charity.

So great was Zacchæus' joy that he did not stop here; he announced a fourfold restoration to any man of whom he had exacted anything wrongfully. If Zacchæus had lived to-day, men would accuse him of being religiously beside himself. Zacchæus had a rare mania!

Give a pastor men like this publican and he will build a church that will startle the world, because they take Jesus and his mission seriously. "To-day is salvation come to this house." How could it be otherwise? At one leap Zacchæus reached greater heights than all the years of prayer mum-

bling and mint-bed tithing had secured for the rulers of Israel. He was so far above them that a Yerkes telescope would not have discovered the mountain upon whose summit he sat. When men get a view of Jesus they become "new creatures."

Thou, who didst walk the Jericho highway midst the blind and the outcasts, walk thou also among us. Forbid that our social position or our possessions, or lack of them, should color our attitude toward our fellow-men, or either darken or distort our vision of thee. Give us that quickness of conscience that, when thou appearest, saying, "Make haste, for to-day I must abide with thee," we shall leap to thy side, not counting houses and lands too much, or even human relationships too sacred, to be set aside that thou mayest have place in our dwelling.

XIII

MARTHA: THE TYRANNY OF THINGS

(Luke 10:38-42.)

THINGS—many things, things heaped up, pressed down, shaken together, running over; important things, mediocre things, frivolous things, hurtful things—life is made up of them. “Things” is usually an impersonal term and covers everything from tweedledee to transcendentalism. Some are legitimate and helpful; others are base and harmful. The most of them carry labels without regard to contents. Choice of the right thing depends upon the cultivated eye, or, perhaps what is still more subtle, the spiritualized instincts of the heart.

Two conditions of life are symbolized by “the many things” and the “one thing.” If men are devotees of the former, they are loath to express it in the cold words of the theorem; in fact, most of them will likely deny knowledge of anything which

crystallizes in any such doctrine. Nevertheless, they are a great majority. A man may be at the same time president of a bank, director of a paper-mill, promoter of a land sales company, but because he has his name on a dozen different letter-heads is no cause for concluding that he is the most useful man in the city. He is bound up in *things*, and the doing of *things* often shuts men away from doing the *one thing* which exceeds, both in size and importance, everything else.

I

Custom binds upon us many foolish as well as useless things. We follow it, not because we want to, but because we are under its tyrannical sway and dare not do otherwise. Many are slaves to the degree of broken health and ruined homes.

Martha was evidently possessed of the idea that the best way to entertain Jesus was to give him a good dinner, and on this she expended her energy. The pots and pans in her pantry held such sway over her that she could not—dared not—break away from them even though the Son of God was in her parlor. One can scarcely con-

ceive how she so misjudged the Master, for certainly, to him, a man's life did not consist in the abundance of the things he ate nor in the effect produced on the palate. Jesus was no Epicurean, although he enjoyed the nice things of life. He came "eating and drinking," but these were simply incidents. He enjoyed the fellowship more than the food. But Martha, like so many women, thought the ends of life were fully met when a good dinner was steaming on the table. Is there a guest announced for the home? Then, the grocer is asked for his choicest, the best cloth is laundered, the silver and glass-ware polished, and Martha extends herself on the flavoring! But if her guest judges her by her housewifely attainments only, then he is unworthy of a place at her table. Our Marthas work themselves almost into nervous collapse stirring the surfaces and incidentals of life, but they fail to get a glimmer of the greater Kingdom of peace which the Marys get while sitting at the feet of the Lord. To Martha, Mary was a shirker, and she was so exercised about it that, unladylike, she showed her temper in the presence of her guest. Martha's crimson

face and heated words still come bursting from many kitchens even to-day.

It is serious enough that Martha was bound by such ideas, but it is even more serious that she sought to compel another to accept her conception of service. She *insisted* that her sister should worship at the shrine of the same god, Custom, and she was so *insistent* that she came to Jesus exclaiming impetuously: "Lord, dost *thou* not care?"

And our good women have their rounds of parties, clubs and dinners, and, when another comes among them, they *insist* that she shall be subject to the same tyranny they enjoy (?); and if she refuses, she is ostracized. There is the sad undercurrent skillfully hidden in the exchange of their shallow ideas, beneath the tawdry display of fashion's nonsense. Sometimes we catch a word of it when two dames get together at the "reception," but every husband knows of the worry, the wonderings, the care-over-nothings, the tired bodies and aching hearts and damaged tempers that return. And what have the dear creatures gained? Nothing but unrest. They do these things because Custom so orders.

"She has gone to take a much-needed rest;" so the editor of the society column writes. When a business or professional man takes a vacation he usually leaves something behind to show for his burned-up energy, but when Martha takes a vacation she leaves little or nothing behind, save other Marthas plotting her social downfall.

The twentieth century is a wonderful era; it is like living with Jack and his beanstalk, or Aladdin and his lamp. But with all our scientific discoveries we have not yet learned the art of being natural; neither will we allow our neighbor to be natural. We approach him with our artificiality, and he, wishing to show that he is "wise," comes back with his. So we live our lives, not as we want to, nor with a view of personal development or enjoyment, but in an unreal atmosphere. The lesser has somehow enlarged its uncanny mouth and stretched its slimy maw until it has finally covered the greater.

II

This "tyranny of things" (thanks to Rev. Richard Roberts for the phrase) grew as insidiously as temporal power, and is

quite as despotic. We awoke one morning to find it here, and it refuses to be driven away. Were it simply a hobo knocking timidly at our back door, we might not have any great concern about it. But instead of a battered hat it wears an iron crown, and it takes possession of our homes just as certainly as it did Martha's kitchen.

To dwell at length upon the claims modern business makes upon our manhood and its tremendous draughts upon their energies would be to spread out facts already too well known. Take with this the demands of modern society upon our wives and mothers, and it will be seen at once that what gets together within the walls of the home at night is but the fag-ends of individuals who have given their strength to something other than that which should be the most delightful and sacred of all—home. When the grind of business wears the vitality out of men, and women have their nerves rubbed raw by the artificialities of society, it is small wonder that the home does not go just right. Instead of creating and fostering, they have turned it into a dormitory and a lunchery. Men and women

owe something more to their companions than the grouches of business and the snobbery of society, and if these make of us grouches and snobs, then both should be either readjusted or abandoned. Home can not be made by carefully swept carpets and properly served meals; neither does a table covered by the latest books and periodicals compensate for the loss of comradeship one has the right to feel within his own walls. The "home spirit" is not a sudden creation; it is a matter of growth, and the passing of time, instead of constricting and chilling it, should deepen and spiritualize it. When Martha's dinner had been served and her company had departed, what had she gained? Aside from the dinner she had contributed nothing, and had received less. She had chilled the spirit of the home rather than enriched it.

Caring for the home is not an end. This does not mean that it should be neglected. Dirt and disorder are not conducive to the development of the home spirit. But it means that our women should care for their homes, not that they may be the best housekeepers, but that they may be home-makers. She who sweeps and

dusts simply because it is a part of her housework is still a Martha in the kitchen, but if she sees in the polished surfaces a reflection of the Edenic home, and if her heart beats in anticipation of the blessed companionship which is theirs when "he" returns at night, then even the tune that she hums will somehow distill itself into the very air and linger like sweet savor, blessing and enriching the occupants of that home.

Pity the healthy woman who rebels at keeping her house in order; likewise pity the one who spends her life and energy in chasing the elusive speck on the parlor chair. Both are in bondage to the tyrant. "Is not the life more than food, and the body than raiment?" It is not a question of whether the furniture is free from dust, but whether the sons and daughters when they go forth into life will take the recollection of a parlor faultlessly arranged, or the blessed memory of a mother who chose the better part. Will those sons and daughters seek to re-create in their homes the splendid atmosphere in which their characters were developed, or will home have meant to them—nothing? Only God knows

how many men are steadied in the storm by the memory of an old home and the splendid ideals it stood for.

III

"Things" deal with superficialities. A modern writer very skillfully and interestingly enumerates a large number of the improvements which we have at our fingertips, and then sagely inquires if the race is any happier than when it was in ignorance of them. After all, has modern science and invention contributed anything to the happiness of the race? Be not too hasty in your reply. We are getting no Gray's "Elegies," because we can not take the seven years to grow them; our Shakespeares and Tennysons are long since dead, and, what is still worse, we are not very much concerned about it. Superficiality is written in large letters over the most of the modern productions. There is more *money* in rag-time music (?) than in sonatas! Thank God for the few men who refuse to prostitute their art. There is an animal contentment of which the rational being should never be guilty. Mary's contentment was in food for the soul.

It is the trivialities of life that swamp the spirit; it beats its wings against the bars of conventionality; it sickens and dies in its cramped quarters because its owner worships things. And the upshot of it all is, we are a worn-out race. Worry has drawn his lines across our foreheads, around our eyes and down from the corners of our mouths. Where we are not bald we are gray; and to what purpose? Because we are slaves of things—things that get us nothing and that benefit no one else. We are bubble-chasers rather than gold-miners. We have tried to fatten our souls on froth rather than getting down into the substance.

IV

In speaking of the "one thing," I am to some, possibly many, as one that dreams. I speak in an unknown tongue, and there is none to interpret. "Mary hath chosen the good part which shall not be taken from her." We can not gain spiritual culture by proxy. And our complex civilization is making it increasingly difficult for men to gain it first-handed. We herd in cities by the hundred thousand; we shoot ourselves

through holes in the ground or travel by lightning express; and where is the opportunity for meditation? Can this awful tyranny of things be broken? Possibly not. But what, then, is to become of our friendships and fellowships? Are these great instincts to be dwarfed or killed outright? Mary left the kitchen at the sore displeasure of her sister: we may have to do likewise. It is more important to cultivate a great friendship than to earn a salary of ten thousand dollars; it is more important to have the fellowship, not only of one's own family, but with other spirits who are kindred, than to own the best business block in the city. When "things" bring trouble and anxiety, then we need to break away from their tyranny and seek our friends—and the great Friend.

O thou great Teacher, we have been the slaves of things so long; custom has begotten within us artificiality and unnaturalness. We have become superficial and interested only in the things of the body which have held us so long in their tyrannous grasp. Help us *now* to break their chains. We pray that we may give our souls greater attention, and that the one

thing—the better part—may no longer be neglected, but that we may quietly and reverently sit at thy feet, which is life's better, richer part.

XIV

THE SOUL OF A SAMARITAN

(Luke 17: 11-19.)

WHAT splendid literary artists were the Gospel narrators! With a few bold strokes they bring the whole scene before the reader's imagination with a vividness almost startling. In the choice words that kindle, as well as words that convey exactness of meaning, these simple narratives stand without parallel in the literary world. Seldom are their phrases awkward, and still more seldom are they ambiguous. No rule of the writer's art is neglected. Rid the King James Version of the terms which a growing tongue has made obsolete during the last three hundred years, and it is still the most monumental work of the Anglo-Saxon. And yet it is but a translation.

Luke states that Jesus was on his way to Jerusalem, for the Passover season was approaching. It was a solemn convocation for every pious Jew. Its bitter herbs re-

called both the scourges and the burdens which the Egyptian taskmasters laid upon the backs of the Israelitish fathers in the centuries long ago. In the roasted flesh was the memory of the sacrificed lamb and the bloody door-posts which turned aside the angel of death. And what history Israel had made since the hand of Jehovah had led them out of that river empire! Some of it was glorious, ringing with power and shimmering with splendor, but much of it must be read sitting in the ash-pit; for through it is the tread of the invading Egyptian, the flaunting of the banners of Assyria, the sheen of the spears of Babylonia and the insolence of Rome. And over and through it all is the baleful shadow of that monstrous worship which was for the most part the cause of all their sorrow—Baal.

Gone were Moses and Joshua and the stirring campaigns they led; gone David's power and Solomon's splendor; gone the Temple and its chanting priests; gone the strength of Israel's army; gone its glory. There is a genuine pathos in their clinging to such institutions as the Roman authority would permit. Pitiable husk of a proud

nation! And, what was still worse, occupying the very middle section of the land of Abraham was the mongrel race of Samaria, hating Israel so bitterly that passage through the land was frequently denied. Did the prophet speak an untruth when he said: "Israel hath received double for all her sins"? But at this time there seems to have been a lull in the hostilities of the two nations, and Jesus "was passing along the borders," when there came to his ears the old cry, "Have mercy!" from ten loathsome, hideous creatures, despised and driven out by their fellow-men.

I

The Western world—thank God!—knows very little of the awfulness of leprosy, that living death of the Orient. We ought to pray God to guide the skilled eyes and intellects of our great physicians to the discovery of the remedy for that awful scourge of the East, old as the race, attacking both rich and poor.

But this "alien" was isolated. "It is not good for man to be alone" was Jehovah's statement as lonely Adam wandered about among the flowers of paradise.

There is no man so complete in himself that he does not need the companionship and association of others. True, some dam up every outflowing stream and barricade against every incoming influence and live to themselves; but love unexpressed and held within their breasts becomes rancid and bitter, and even the face grows hard and devilish. When the bright spot appeared on this man's flesh he was driven away from his home forever, and his only companions were those whose bodies were afflicted like unto his. Occasionally a well man came within crying distance, as had Jesus, but even then they were "standing afar off."

And I have thought of the aloofness of men from each other, and how we (whether compelled to or not) regard each other with suspicion. Instead of supposing, as does the law, that every man is innocent until proven guilty, we regard every man as a rascal until he is tested. We hold ourselves "afar off," and we see to it that the other fellow keeps himself "afar off" also. This man was one of a small coterie, but not from choice; he was not enjoying their fellowship. The incidents

of this narrative show that he was a far more noble and generous soul than those with him. He was the *Paul* among the prisoners, the *Jean Valjean* among the criminals, the *Ben Hur* among the galley-slaves. This forced isolation cut deep into his sensitive soul, and in addition to the disease eating towards his vitals, of which he was conscious all the time, there was that sadder realization—he had no friend.

When you pass a battered face on the street, did it ever occur to you that beneath it was a heart equally bruised? What possibilities of friendship and fellowship have been crushed and blasted in that heart! Had he enjoyed the early and latter rain instead of the parching winds and autumn frosts, he might have put the best of us to shame with his greatness of soul. But now he is “afar off,” on the same level with others—cynical, sullen, defeated—the last drop of faith in humanity, or in himself, wrung from his heart—a heart that *might* have beaten as sympathetically as John’s. It is not a time for God-thanking that we are not as other men, but rather a time to be asking if our hands have held the iron sword that has

pierced a brother's soul. Possibly *I* have contributed to his "leprosy."

Life consists in doing things, and he is not a man who is content in idleness. Neither were we intended to drive our mental and physical machinery beyond capacity, using, day after day, the last drop of energy. If there was anything the Master taught without mentioning it, it was the conservation of strength, the quiet seasons with friends, the hours of meditation to which every person is entitled, and without which every one is certain to suffer spiritual as well as intellectual necrosis. If there is one doctrine to be emphasized, it is the gospel of relaxation; we are too tense.

But, whether the muscles be physical or mental, they must not be allowed to grow flaccid and useless through inactivity. We must not fear to attempt the greatest tasks nor refuse to offer our backs to the heaviest burdens. What shall be said of the man whose soul should be on fire, whose heart should be bursting with a mighty desire for God, and yet is alien to his purposes and negative to his Kingdom? Everywhere are great, stalwart minds, lives being burned

up, wasted in the accumulation of the things that can not abide. Those lives should be used for Christ. Men and women lean upon him for eternal salvation, and yet stand "afar off" when the call to service comes. There is too much "alien" within us and not enough Christian patriotism.

II

There was a distance between the leper and his fellow-men that could not be bridged; the chasm was there. The analogy between leprosy and sin has been drawn so many times that I shall not attempt it here. But I am thinking of another great company who "stand afar off." It may be true that their eyes, literally, are not on us; that their hands are not outstretched in our direction; that their ears are not listening for our words, or their hearts beating for our gospel; they "are dead in trespasses and sins." These are they from whom our great city churches are retreating, the polyglot masses who live between the business blocks of the city and the residential boulevards, "little Bohemias, Austrias, Russias." And over a great number of these even the Roman Church has lost

its power. Our American population has preserved its *respectability* by building great churches approachig in splendor the medieval cathedrals, both in size and beauty; but the distance between the church on the avenue and the "little Italy" is more than ocean wide. If the American churches can not Christianize the incoming alien, how can we expect the outgoing missionary with his meager equipment to Christianize the heathen world? We expect our missionaries to do for millions what our millions do not do for thousands. The average city Christian is farther from Russia on Blank Street than Russia in Warsaw. We thrill at the prospect of carrying the Protestant gospel into Poland, but we do not have the faintest heart flutter at the splendid opportunity of opening a Bible school among the foreigners in our own city. We "stand afar off" and the alien "stands afar off," and how can God bridge the distance? He *may* do it, but we can be certain that this end of the span will not rest in our cold hearts. If there is from us no outgoing sympathy to these men by the wayside, then there will be no incoming blessing to our hearts.

Men have gone on long pilgrimages to

get the rude songs of the American Indians; they have endured great privations to record the folk-songs of the children of the desert; and they have sought, even at the peril of their lives, the weird music of the Congo. But where is the man who has attempted the analysis of the pathos, the sob, in this alien cry: "Jesus, Master, have mercy!"? No one save he who has had it wrung from his own lips in bitterness, and who has felt as well the insurge of divine grace, knows the music of: "God so loved the world that he gave."

It is not the cry of one that fears the lash, not the cry of the cringing coward, but it is the cry of a great soul sinking for the last time. Men for whom the Master died, poor and weak though they may be, yet they are the children of the Lord. What practice we need in showing mercy! We are such an abrupt folk; we thrust out our card stating briskly that "we have come to show mercy"—professional mercy-showers! Or we do what is still more unfeeling—delegate our mercy-showing to associations and committees, because that rids us of the bother. The greatest needs in this world are not met by checks on the

bank; men are not seeking money; they are seeking *friends*.

III

The ten went to show themselves to the priest, and as they went they were healed. Wonderful transformation! But nine forgot their Benefactor. Only this "stranger" returned to Jesus. If to him life's water had been Marah, he has now reached the springs of Elim; if he had descended into the abyss of pain, he is now with Jesus on the mountain-top of joy. Need we search further for the elements of greatness? Did Jesus ever touch human experience more vitally? Gratefulness is one of the very first essentials in spiritual development.

Only the tithe returned after the wonderful cleansing. Men come to the altars of the Lord in our century beating their breasts abjectly, crying: "Mercy! Mercy!" Yet the majority of them depart never thinking of him whose divine compassion has loosed them from the pangs of death. How long since you cried to him for spiritual health, and have you done as did the nine? Turn back to-day and praise him.

There is an interesting parallel here:

"They *lifted up their voices*, saying, . . . mercy," and he glorified God "*with a loud voice*." He glorified God with the same vigor that he implored mercy. In asking for mercy he was seeking *impression*; in glorifying God he was seeking *expression*. It would seem that men exhaust their strength in asking, for they are usually silent in thanksgiving. Christians go about in silence when they should be glorifying God with a *loud voice*, and the loudest voice is not necessarily vocal. The most effective preaching is not the harangue of an air-sawing, red-faced pulpiter; it is rather the consecrated servants of God who in a prayerful and businesslike manner set about the fulfillment of our Lord's last commandment to preach the gospel to every creature.

We expect that there will be manifest gratitude, and we are prepared for the loud voice of thanksgiving, and we are not surprised when he falls on his face before the Master. The narrative flows along naturally and smoothly until, with a severe jerk, Luke brings the reader up with: "And he was a Samaritan." Every emphasis is placed on "*he*." The nine,

who evidently were Jews and from whom gratitude and praise would be expected, were not there; but the one who showed such profound gratefulness was a Samaritan. What depths of heart Jesus stirred in the most unexpected places. Samaria was a sterile field and, by the Jews, to be avoided, but Jesus, by chance it would seem, revealed two very rare jewels—the woman at the well, and this leper—and what might be said of the good Samaritan of the parable? There are Samaritans all about you; be slow to condemn. Pray God that you are not found among the nine.

Jesus, thou blessed Master, behold us marked and scarred by sin, some of our faculties impaired, some ruined; have thou mercy upon us. As at thy word the currents of life throbbed through the bodies of those men on the borders of despised Samaria, so at thy command may our spirits answer to the Holy Spirit whom thou didst send into the world. Give us loud voices to glorify thee, and hearts that will not forget, and a faith that makes us whole.

XV

PONTIUS PILATE: THE SIN OF COMPROMISE

(Luke 23: 13-25.)

POSSIBLY Pontius Pilate has had more sermonic mention than all the apostles save Peter, John and Paul. Men have not hesitated to place him in the same company with Judas; they have found it exceedingly difficult to deal fairly with him because of the part he took in the execution of our Lord. However, let us attempt a dispassionate study of this most tragic event in the life of the procurator.

Even a cursory reading of these brief New Testament accounts will reveal a very complex situation, as well as some of the terrible influences which beat against the Roman judge. To a limited degree the reader is conscious of the fanatical spirit and the intolerant bigotry of that Oriental mob which surged about the procurator's hall of judgment. He is conscious, too,

that back of that rabble was a group of devilishly cunning priests industriously feeding the mob spirit in the name of religion and patriotism, and it was by the mob these priests knew they could obtain their insane desire—the death of the Prophet.

And yet we find it practically impossible to project ourselves back over the centuries and understand the position in which Pilate found himself that most memorable Friday morning in the history of the Hebrew race. For days the Jewish pilgrims by the thousand had been pouring into the Holy City. Unless the governor had a considerable body of troops at call, a mob was a very nasty thing to handle at any time, much less at the present, when its number might very quickly run into thousands. It might develop into a general resurrection costing the Roman Government great trouble and expense, and Pilate was responsible to the Emperor.

Pilate's personal and official history, together with what he *might have done*, does not concern this discussion. Any one interested in the former is referred to the encyclopedia, and if in the latter, to the speculations of his own imagination. We

have the record of what he did, and that is what concerns us.

I

If any have the idea that Pilate was an incompetent, let them consult the records of his official life. He had a long term of service under Tiberius Cæsar. The very fact that he was assigned to what was perhaps the most difficult province in the Roman Empire shows that he was by no means a man of ordinary ability. Where was there a people with a richer history, with more ancient traditions; a people more fanatically religious, or who possessed a more bitter contempt for their national neighbors, than Israel? Clearly, then, he who represented the Roman Government among such a nation must possess both tact and judgment.

Yet with all his ability Pilate was simply a man, and this his critics seem to forget. If a man's position requires that he take the initiative in great questions, that he pass final judgment on important points, that he administer government, there is with all this the possibility of mistake. If the issues with which he deals are so im-

portant, then the mistakes he makes will be correspondingly serious. At best the mind of man is fallible.

Little did Pilate suppose that his fame throughout all generations would rest upon some two or three hours' association with an obscure Galilean. Yet had it not been for this incident, what would the twentieth-century world know of him? Does it know his predecessors? We have to ransack history to find even their names. In the process of the development of God's purpose Pilate played his part, not as a weakling, but as a typical Roman official.

If you can, look through Pilate's eyes, feel with his heart. If the Jew hated the Roman, then the Roman had an equally profound contempt for the son of Israel. They were to the procurator nothing save a means by which to gather a fortune, and that quickly. This accomplished, he intended to return to the city by the Tiber and enjoy life as a Roman patrician.

But on this Friday morning of the Passover week, before the morning sunlight had scarcely touched the spires and domes of the Holy City, members of the Sanhedrin, headed by the chief priests, to-

gether with such others as were interested and curious, brought a prisoner before the governor with the demand that he pass immediate sentence—the death penalty. Pilate's first words were what would be expected from any upright official: "What accusation bring ye against this man?" Their reply, "If he were not an evil-doer we should not have delivered him over to you," was so indefinite that the judge sought further evidence. They had no charge save that they hated the Christ, but they thought because *they*—the Sanhedrin—demanded Christ's death, Pilate would ratify their decision without further examination. But the Roman was a better official than they supposed! As they had no definite charge, he questioned the prisoner, with the result that Pilate, pagan that he was, understood that Christ had done nothing worthy of death, and so announced: "I find no fault in him." Could better official conduct be expected?

Every man is either in the mob accusing Jesus, or in the Prætorium declaring: "I find no fault in him." Men rail at him; they pervert and distort his teaching; they accuse him falsely; yet when their motives

are laid bare, it is found that the prince of darkness dwells in their hearts. Satan found nothing in the Christ, though he tried him by temptation and death.

II

Here the governor should have stopped. Thus far he would have been safe, with no blot against him and nothing to explain. Had he shown the same iron purpose he did an hour or two later when he cut the priests off sharply with, "What I have written I have written," the story would have been very different. But he wanted to throw a sop to the Jewish hierarchy, so he said: "I will therefore chastise him and let him go." If, as he had just announced, he found no fault in him, then where in the name of justice had he the right to "chastise him"? He suggested a compromise, and the keen-eyed devils of Jewry saw it. If the governor were willing to chastise an innocent man, he could be forced further if their clamor were loud enough. When a man compromises on the right, his self-respect bids him adieu, and this was the beginning of Pilate's real trouble. Then he went still further in the compromise in

setting the two prisoners before the mob and giving them their choice. The priests had "fixed" the multitude, and their hoarse cry at once answered: "Away with this man; crucify him!"

There has never been a more awful hour in the history of the race; never have more horrible and blasphemous screams issued from the throats of men than those that came from the mouths of this fiendish mob stirred up by the spiritual (?) leaders of Israel. This was the ominous roar of the oncoming storm; each moment it increased in fury despite the efforts of Pilate to calm it. Jesus spoke to the stormy waves of Galilee and they obeyed, but the Roman procurator could neither speak nor threaten this storm into submission. If ever hell turned itself inside out and spued its venom over the earth, it was at this tragic hour. See the miter of the high priest as with stately tread he moved before the multitude; see the company of lesser priests, the ragged rabble, the troubled Roman judge, and see the silent, majestic Christ; hear the pandemonium and the blasphemous shrieks. Lear and Macbeth and Othello are cheap and colorless in comparison. Three times

the governor raises the question, and three times his voice is drowned in the insane roar of the tempest. In the midst of all that hissing, seething, boiling mass stands Jesus, the calmest of all. He had prayed it through the night before in the garden of Gethsemane. Even now across the centuries, in the ebb of the tempest, we can catch the first words of the governor's question, "Why, what evil—?" and then comes the mad surge, stronger and fiercer each time: "Crucify him, crucify him! Away with him! Give us Barabbas!" God pity the Roman! He was trying, but with miserable success. Reason with that mob? Reason with a Dakota blizzard? Reason with a wounded grizzly? Reason with the tropical sun? Pilate was but a man; condemn him not too severely.

III

When Pilate proposed the compromise he set the wedge, and the enemies of Jesus hammered it most vigorously, and there could be no doubt as to the result. "Their voices prevailed." Our axiom, the truth of which is seriously questioned, is: "The voice of the people is the voice of God."

But in this case the voice of the people is none other than the echo of hell. Do you say that this mob was not representative of Israel? But the chief priests were leading it! It may be possible that the good people were still in their homes, and, again, it may be true that they were not!

When the people think out a question and act sanely and dispassionately, then there *may* be some truth in the axiom. But the occasions when men do that are pathetically few. We are a "touch-and-go" race. If a skillful orator makes an address that pleases us, up go our hats and in go our votes, and that passes as "the voice of God." Yet this is the voice that spells out defeat. Democracy gives men liberty of speech and act, but, unfortunately, it can not give them brains! Scarcely seven days before, this very mob were casting their garments and strewing palm branches before Jesus as he entered the city, crying: "Hosanna! Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord." And now they are yelling themselves hoarse for his destruction; and yet "the people have spoken." So? These are the voices that prevail in our cities, in jury verdicts, in municipal

elections; and they always mean defeat.

Matthew says a "tumult was arising," and Mark says Pilate "wished to content the multitude." But now all opportunity for retreat was gone forever; the kitten had suddenly become a tiger. Spectacularly the governor washed his hands before them, but what cared they for his dramatics so long as they had Jesus in their power? There was but one right course and of that Pilate was well aware, else why so reluctant to proceed with the trial?

The last line is the saddest of all, "But Jesus he delivered up to their will;" that is, he threw the lamb into the hyena's den.

In touching the procurator's experience Jesus showed him pitifully weak, wavering between the straight course and compromise, and that upon a question of life and death, and finally falling into a pit his enemies had dugged for him. It shows him condemning the innocent and bidding the guilty go free; it reveals him the assassin of innocence and virtue and proffering the olive branch to treason and murder. Such official acts as his are the cause of mobs, anarchy, communism and revolution. Sifted down, Pilate was the cause of the crucifixion of

Jesus; he wavered, and that was like oil on the flames.

When the Christ touches your experience what will he find—amazing weakness, or splendid strength? No matter how great our ability may be, or how important the position we hold, there must be such strength of heart that compromise is impossible.

O blessed Christ, thou standest in our judgment-hall with closed lips, but with open eyes and heart, watching our struggles. The shrieks of the assassins of virtue and innocence are hissing from the throats of the rabble. They are seeking to kill thee in our modern life and to rob the suffering sons of men of thy holy influence forever. Help us not to waver in this tumult, nor be frightened into suggesting compromise. Give us the strength to drive them from the judgment-seat, that thou mayest have the glory and honor which are thine.

XVI

SIMON OF CYRENE: COMPULSORY SERVICE

(Matt. 27:32.)

HAMLET, prince of Denmark," never had any bodily existence, yet he is by far the greatest character in the literary world. Neither Napoleon, whose military genius thrilled all Europe, nor yet Washington, whose statesmanship created the new empire of the Western Hemisphere, has commanded half the serious attention given this creature of Shakespeare's imagination, whose existence is confined to some 130 pages written more than three hundred years ago. Think "Tragedy" and you think "Hamlet."

But for *real* tragedy the story told in the closing chapters of the Gospels is at the same time the most amazing as well as the most heart-gripping known in the annals of men. Beside it "Hamlet" is an idle tale. Neither history nor the imagination

has ever approximated these terrible scenes. From Gethsemane's garden to Joseph's tomb there is that stately, yet sublimely awful, procession of calamitous events. In this drama there is no "drunken porter," as in "Macbeth," or no "fool," as in "Lear"; there is no relaxation, for the stage is set and the atmosphere grows each moment more tense and stifling. Portentous clouds boil up on the horizon and are caught and whirled and torn by the oncoming tempest. There is the angry quiver of the lightning and the muffled growl of the thunder in the darkening heavens, and then the storm breaks in crashing fury. In its ebb and flow one hears the shrill crowing of the cock and the sob of the broken-hearted disciple; he catches something of the coarse buffoonery of the soldiers and the despairing wail of the traitor; the splash of the stupefying liquid dropping back into the vessel, and, most terrible of all, the sharp staccato of the hammer on the spikes.

Do you ask to see hell at work? Then, do not follow the imagination of Milton or Dante, but follow the Christ to the cross. In the barracks the cohort of Roman soldiers gather; they remove the garments of Jesus

and throw about his shoulders an old scarlet and blue military cloak. They plait a crown of thorns and press it down upon his head; they smite him with reeds and the palms of their hands; they spit upon him. Mockingly they kneel and raise high their ribald shouts: "Hail, king of the Jews!" Tiring of their horseplay, they reclothe Jesus and lead him forth to be crucified. As the procession passed out of the gate of the city, Jesus fell beneath the weight of the cross. Seeing it was physically impossible for him to carry it farther, the officer in charge laid hold on Simon of Cyrene and compelled him to "bear the cross after Jesus."

I

"Seek, and ye shall find," said Jesus; but we often find what we are not seeking because we are strongly human and are in search of those things the possession of which we think will give us pleasure. Trouble-hunting is a melancholy pastime, and he who engages in it is afflicted with a very unfortunate mania. Man by nature chooses the sunshine. And in his choice of a business or a profession he selects the

one that promises the maximum of satisfaction and the minimum of discomfort. Yet hard work is no barrier to enjoyment; in fact, we are the happiest when we work the hardest, providing the task is to our liking. Who has not heard of the long hours Mr. Edison spends in his laboratory, working on some important invention—incredible hours without sleep or even food? It is the thing a man is *compelled* to do that makes him fret and that ages him prematurely.

Were I seeking an earthly paradise I would betake myself to the South Sea Islands, where Nature's arms are always open, where the soft sea breeze kisses the rose and the magnolia, where food is hanging from every branch and the only shelter needed is the shadow of the palm. By the blue waves of an eternally summer sea, under a bluer sky, I would "quaff this kind nepenthe" and dream, but never work, because Nature supplies my every need.

Yet with all this splendid prodigality, the South Sea Islands have not produced any great men. It takes a condition quite the reverse from bright skies and tropical landscapes to develop art and invention.

It is significant that, practically without exception, all the great civilizations have been developed in the temperate zone, where men have been compelled to meet daily the rough changes of climate—burning heat, bitter cold, raging tempest. From these they had to have protection and shelter, hence the philosophy of clothes and the evolution of the home with its conveniences and decorations. Climate is a very *compelling* force among men.

What is true of our external relationships is also true of our character development. The easy path does not make great Christians any more than the salubrious climate of the South Sea Islands makes great men. Here is the example of Jesus: it is the way of blood, of torture, of death. He had a goal before him, but to reach it he had to pass through Pilate's judgment-hall and up the steep ascent of Calvary. In our Christian development we may expect grim faces at the doorway summoning us to the distasteful, perhaps the repugnant, and pointing to the seemingly impossible, and thither we must go.

Attempt such? And why not? If the surroundings are hostile, then they should

be a stirring challenge to meet them. It is said that Beethoven "loved to let the winds and the storms beat upon his bare head, and see the dazzling play of the lightning." There was something about the riotous fury of the tempest that called to his genius. So I believe great resistance is called forth by the presence of great issues, the decision of which means destiny.

II

Simon was probably a merchant from the North African province of Cyrene and had come to Jerusalem for business and religion, making his business visit at the time of the Passover. He little suspected that an ignoble service would be thrust upon him, yet a service which would forever glorify his name. In this act the reader gets a glimpse of the insolence of Rome. Simon was a peaceful citizen from a far-away province, intent on his own business and apparently going in the opposite direction. Instead of taking one of that yelling rabble which had so clamorously demanded the execution of Christ, and laying the beams of the cross upon him, the rough hand of authority was laid upon one who

was not only not connected with the tragedy, but who was ignorant of the whole procedure, for "he was coming in from the country."

Jesus was suffering as one of the most ignominious criminals of the empire, and to be "compelled" (note the word) to walk after him and bear the instrument of torture implied that Simon was of the same class, or was, at least, in sympathy with Christ's teaching and work.

But may there not have been a reason why Simon was drafted into service? Men will stop to look at almost any kind of a procession, and Simon was human. There is also a latent reservoir of pity in the heart of every man, unless cruelty has dried it up. When the Cyrenian saw the weakened Christ sway and fall beneath the weight of the cross, saw the pallid face and the dark hair matted with dust and blood, could he do other than stop? What would *you* have done? Is it improbable that an unconscious cry escaped his lips, and this was what called the soldiers' attention to him? "Pity Him? then bear his burden."

Can any man look upon this portrait of the suffering Christ and not be profound-

ly stirred? No matter how hard may be his heart, there is something tremendously gripping about this narrative, and he comes back to it again and again.

It is true that this sad story holds the attention and arouses the sympathetic emotions, but, if that is all, then Hugo and Dickens do as much. The strength of it is not in its literary finish, nor yet in its remarkable simplicity; it is rather in the sublime facts it portrays and the marvelous results it secures; it makes of men *new creatures*. When I read "Quo Vadis" or "Ben Hur" I am interested for the time, but I can lay the volume aside and the impression soon passes, but not so with this. There is something so compelling about it that it takes hold of every red corpuscle and clutches every muscular fiber; and, more than that, it filters down into that mysterious alembic, the mind, where Reason and Will sit as hooded judges, and there preaches its solemn truth. Flee from it? Perhaps; but you will return and say with Thomas: "My Lord and my God."

It revolutionized Paul's life. It sent him journeying across miasmatic plains and through robber-infested hills; it sent him

over rough seas and on weary pilgrimages. Like his illustrious Jewish sire, he "went out not knowing whither he went" and not knowing what was before him, save bonds and afflictions in every city; the dungeon yawned for him and the arena awaited. Yet when the executioner's ax was raised above him he shouted triumphantly: "I have fought a good fight; there is laid up for me the crown." Paul was *compelled* to go with Jesus; he could not do otherwise and be true to himself. And ten thousand others have followed in his train because they could not resist his passionate appeal, his matchless heroism, his splendidly rounded character and his enthusiastic teaching, as well as his magnanimous invitation and wonderful promises. He is the delight of the righteous and the despair of the wicked. He has changed the despotisms of earth into great, liberty-breathing democracies, and has taught men to love their neighbors as themselves.

III

When we make a historical study of the events in the life of our Lord, particularly those in the last two or three days prior to

the crucifixion, there are many places where we would have been glad to have stepped in and helped him. If those who were with him could have seen him as we see him through the experiences of twenty centuries, with all the blessed influence he has exerted upon mankind, as well as the hope and comfort he has been to the world, they, too, might have treated him very differently. But human nature is one of the few things that remain constant, and, were the conditions reversed and we placed back two thousand years, we might be found among the rabble. By the grace of God we are what we are.

For centuries the Messianic hope throbbed in the hearts of all patriotic Jews. Occasionally the spirit of prophecy stirred the breast of a vine-dresser or a herdsman, and he broke the silence with thrilling recitals of His mission and magnificent descriptions of His character, couched in wonderful imagery and breathing with poetic power. But when the Messiah actually stood before their eyes, he possessed no form or beauty that they desired him; he was despised and rejected, this Man of sorrows. If they had "known

him," the high priest might not have incited the worthless rabble to cry: "Crucify!" Simon would have gladly borne the cross, and Judas would not have sold him for eighteen dollars because he "esteemed him not," nor would his disciples have forsaken him; in short, the crucifixion would not have taken place.

There are few things sadder than to be willfully and persistently misunderstood. It would seem that Jesus was never quite able to get his purposes "over," as the dramatists would say. His brothers and sisters misunderstood him; his disciples were "slow of heart"; the leading men of his people accused him of having a devil. How lonely was the Son of God; none but the Father understood him.

And as late in the history of Christianity as this, men are still trying to make Jesus say perverse things. We owe it to Christ as a matter of common justice to study his claims most carefully before we criticize adversely. Men continue to say harsh and unkind things about the Church and all it is supposed to represent, when, in fact, they have never given the subject an hour's honest attention. This is the class that

crucified Jesus, that clamored for the death of Paul, that was the tool in the hands of cunning and infamous churchmen during the Inquisition to crush men who dared think, that fought (vainly, thank God!) the Reformation. These are the ones who think the caricatures of *Puck* and *Judge* represent real types of the Christian ministry! Neither the Church nor its ministry is above criticism (in fact, it is invited); but it makes a difference whether it is a sage or an ass that speaks. Let the critic be constructive.

Let us also apply this principle of criticism to individuals as well. It is easy to attribute a man's acts to base motives and to charge him with teaching a pernicious doctrine. But he who does so would do well to remember the word of Jesus: "With what judgment ye judge ye shall be judged."

Simon bore the burden of Jesus, but Jesus was bearing a greater burden for Simon. It is that awful burden that presses every man to the earth, the burden of sin. "*Sin*" has been sandpapered and puttied and painted and whitewashed and called soft names so long that our modern world is in danger of thinking the old serpent is tooth-

less and harmless; that it is only a bogey from the Middle Ages to frighten the innocent. Before that conclusion is accepted as final, note these words carefully: "Then the soldiers of the governor took Jesus into the Prætorium, and gathered unto him the whole band. And they stripped him, and put on him a scarlet robe. And they platted a crown of thorns and put it upon his head, and a reed in his right hand; and they kneeled down before him, and mocked him, saying, Hail, King of the Jews! And they spat upon him, and took the reed and smote him on the head. And when they had mocked him, they took off from him the robe, and put on his garments, and led him away to crucify him." This is the picture of sin carried to its logical conclusion. There is nothing too sacred for its villainy, nothing too holy to escape the cross.

From the highest heights to the deepest depths the Master came, and on his blood-stained vesture is written: "King of kings and Lord of lords." He "saw the travail of his soul and was satisfied." This is holy ground; tread lightly. Here the Son of God struggled alone, his human friends

fleeing and the face of his Father veiled, but eternal life was born.

O righteous Son of God, we would hide our faces from the agony thou didst endure for us. We have seen the cruelty, the mockery, the base indignity which devilish men heaped upon thee. We have walked by thy side as thou didst tread the *Via Dolorosa*. And when thou didst fall beneath the cross, we saw another made to bear its ignominious load. So thou didst bear our transgressions.

Yet the things which thy blessed hands have touched have been strangely glorified—the thorny crown, the rough garments, the forced service of the Cyrenian. The myrtle blossoms at the foot of the cross, and the rose and the ivy, have twined about its rough, ignoble beams, but thou art here, nearer than hands and feet, nearer than breathing. Thy holy life and blessed example compel us; lead thou us on.

XVII

BARABBAS: VICARIOUS SUFFERING

(Matt. 27: 15-18.)

HE is the best musical composer who is the most skillful in working up his climaxes. To produce the effect he has in mind he calls upon the skill of his orchestra, the vocal and histrionic ability of his singers and the chorus arrangement. The score is carefully planned and the phrasing critically studied; every ascending step in the "ladder" is calculated with splendid judgment. The power and timbre of each instrument is weighed and the genius of the artists challenged. All these things, supplemented by the tricks of stagecraft, enable the composer to thrust the climax of his production before the eyes and upon the ears of his audience.

In this tragedy the movement is constantly towards a tremendous *finale*, and the nearer it approaches the more increased is the *tempo*, the more rapid is the action,

the more intense the atmosphere; until, with a wild plunge and furious shriek, the clangor of the final *crescendo* surges over the beholder. And then it cuts off suddenly—as suddenly as the conductor's baton cuts off the thunder of his musicians—and there is naught but a groan, a woman's sob, a councilor's quiet request; then—night.

In the midst of this wild demonstration the Roman governor introduced another face, one the Jews knew very well. It belonged to a man who was guilty of sedition, and, more, he had violated the fundamental commandment against taking life. He was one of those peculiar degenerates whose race is by no means extinct, possessing the shrewd cunning of a fox, the ability of leadership, together with a disregard for life and a scorn for government which made him at once dangerous to both state and municipality. He was reactionary and anarchistic and murderous. With him at large, society was in danger, and this they knew; hence, Barabbas had been apprehended and imprisoned. Base passions and primal instincts had run riot through his body, brutalizing his intellect and strangling his affections. His face was coarse and

sensual; his heart hard and devilish; a cold, crafty glint in his eye and a cynical sneer on his lips. It would have been difficult to have found a more dangerous degenerate than he.

Over against him the procurator set Jesus, the embodiment of purity, of holy purpose, of lofty vision. The clear-cut features of the Nazarene—his eyes, his nose, his chin—showed at once that he was both poet and prophet. "Whom will ye," questioned the Roman, "that I release unto you? Barabbas, or Jesus who is called Christ?" Could there be any choice? Certainly not, so he thought. One look at that brutalized face, and they would shrink back at the suggestion of releasing such as he among the innocent and unprotected; not the traitor and murderer, surely! But the answer came quickly, so hoarse and positive that it fairly made the walls tremble: "Barabbas!" Jesus he delivered up; Barabbas he released.

Each of the Gospel writers draws the picture in a very graphic sentence—the innocent suffering in the place of the guilty. And this is where Christ most vitally touches human experience.

I

The Bible is by no means the only place where we are brought face to face with the ugly fact of sin and guilt. As the historian writes down the record of events, he may not, and usually does not, inform the reader that much of the narrative is the record of the effects of sin. But he who reads philosophically is sure to see back of the film of words the cause, and he is cognizant also of a spirit more malignant and a dozen times more diabolical than the Mephistopheles of Goethe's "Faust." Practically without exception the wars of the world have been caused by the unholy desire of oppression, to gain territory, to suppress liberty. Many the fertile valley overrun by the soldiery of a stronger people; many the home destroyed by the brutal troops of an alien power who had no right there save as might makes right; many the wide plain ravaged and left smoking and desolate by the warriors of a hostile nation. Assyria was not the first to sweep out of her strongholds and assail a weaker people, nor was Israel the last to have her capital city besieged and burned.

The history of the Middle Ages is a remarkable story of lust, intrigue and bloodshed. One can not read the chronicler's narrative of those awful days without feeling something of their blight. He can not breathe well until he comes out into the Renaissance where men begin once more to assert their inherent right of freedom of thought. And, what was worst of all, the horrid phantasm was induced and fed by the Church, whose chosen instruments were the stake, the rack and the screw. *Red* was, and continues to be, its color.

But there is another side that tells the story more powerfully than the page of history; it is the individual conscience. Conscience is a wonderful thing; it is the finger of God within. The Psalmist states it thus graphically:

"Whither shall I go from thy Spirit?
Or whither shall I flee from thy presence?
If I ascend into heaven, thou art there:
If I make my bed in Sheol, behold, thou art there.
If I take the wings of the morning,
And dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea;
Even there shall thy hand lead me,
And thy right hand shall hold me."

Conscience and guilt can not live together; if one persists, the other dies, and

guilt always follows transgression. Adam and Eve hid themselves; Cain lied; Peter wept; Judas hanged himself. No matter whether the individual be Jew or Gentile, Oriental or Occidental, male or female, Laplander or Samoan, guilt is his common property. Hence the object of all religious worship, from the crudest shrine of the Congoese to the most magnificent cathedral altar of enlightened man, is to rid the conscience of the smart of guilt. The sin of Adam is perfectly psychological from beginning to end, and what transpired in Adam's case is exactly what happens in the case of every individual, and the result is invariable—guilt and expulsion. Sin is a process, and the conclusion is persistently and unchangingly death.

It is not strange, therefore, that the very first glimmerings of divine revelation should be concerned with the psychology of this great trouble in the human family. It makes little difference whether the Genesis narrative is parable, the result of composite authorship or genuine history; the critical problem does not change the psychology of the story. Whoever wrote it knew the working of the human mind,

and this is what we are interested in just here. "How am I to be rid of guilt?" is what concerns John Smith, U. S. A., the same as the Adam of Genesis 3. And this is the problem to which the Bible addresses itself.

Nor has it been a Biblical problem alone. There were two methods of approaching it before the coming of Christ. The first was by the Jewish law, which had for its intent the perfection of men on the plane of justice. If a man did right under all circumstances and was infallible in his judgment, then there was no quarrel between him and God; there was no sting of sin, no smart of conscience. The Jews worked on this problem for fifteen hundred years under the most favorable circumstances. In territory they were separated from their neighbors by a western sea, by southern and eastern desert, and by northern mountains. They were possessed of a divinely given law and, at various periods in their history, had brilliant prophetic leadership. Of course they were ignorant of the intent of their national life, laws and institutions, but that does not change the fact. If perfection could have been

developed under such conditions, they ought to have made some progress during that millennium and a half. But Paul, the most scholarly of the Christian Jews, argues that the law was "a yoke which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear."

In our own generation, when men are asking if they can not be saved by their own goodness, let them remember that Israel had fifteen hundred years of experience in that very thing, but that sin was too great a handicap to be overcome. During these years they passed through periods of brilliant prosperity as well as appalling national disaster, and the land was swept clean of its inhabitants. But neither prosperity nor calamity, nor yet the combination, succeeded in calling forth that perfection which was necessary above all else to meet God on the standard of merit.

But there remains the second side. While Israel was at work on his problem, the Greek was at work on his, and I use the Greek as typical of the Gentile world. It was not his task to make conscience perfect by law, but rather by philosophy and culture. If the Jew had been given a territory particularly adapted to the work-

ing out of his problem, so had the Greek. The blue waters of the Ægean and Ionian Seas caressed the shores of that historic peninsula, contributing much to its salubrious climate, which was neither the burning heat of the tropics nor the bitter cold of the Arctic, but rather the golden mean. Hill and valley and plain mingled in splendid profusion. Greece, too, was separated from her neighbors, yet in the great trade routes of the world. In her ideal location she gave herself up to the solution of her problem, not knowing the importance of it, or that she was making a demonstration that must stand as typical throughout all time. Her Phidias in sculpture and her Pericles in architecture are at once the despair and inspiration of the modern artistic world. The Homeric "Iliad" is the pattern epic of them all, and the Greek drama with its carefully wrought strophe and measured chorus is an artistic production peculiar to itself; while in philosophy Socrates and Plato still wear the crown of honor.

Yet it was often the temples whose lines were the most harmonious and whose symmetry was the most perfect which shel-

tered the most hideous and degrading forms of worship. The wisest philosopher might be at the same time the most reprobate. Strangely enough, culture and corruption increased in approximately the same ratio, until the latter undermined the former, and the whole dazzling fabric crashed to ruin irreparable.

These two great nations carried on this work side by side; the Jew in his bigoted narrowness spitting at the Greek, and the Greek in his supposedly superior wisdom making faces at his Jewish brother, neither guessing that they were working on two sides of the same problem. There is, therefore, a splendid significance about the apostolic statement: "In the fulness of time God sent his Son." Had he come a thousand years earlier, men would have been justified in turning toward either one of these great fields just discussed. But when at last the Christ did come, Peter's question was in point: "Lord, to whom can we go? thou hast the words of eternal life." Men had already demonstrated under the most favorable conditions that law or culture, or both, were impossible as means of salvation. They could not cleanse the con-

science of guilt. It remained now for the "grace of God to be shed abroad in our hearts through Jesus Christ our Lord," that men might be new creatures walking in the fullness of life.

II

This introduces the doctrine of vicarious suffering, which, with some, is unpopular. But he who rejects it is referred to the other two just discussed. The doctrine is common to practically all races, ancient and modern. According to the Greek myth, King Minos laid a yearly tribute of seven youths and seven virgins upon the Athenians. These were to feed the Minotaur, a bull-headed, man-bodied monster of Crete. Thus, according to the myth, fourteen young people died every year to save Athens. This represents the doctrine of substitution. Under the Jewish *regime*, animals suffered, but the blood of bulls and goats could not take away sin. The human conscience somehow conceived the idea that by sacrificing an innocent human victim guilt would thereby be removed. Hence the Egyptians gave a virgin to the Nile; Moab and India gave their babies, the one to the heated

image of Moloch and the other to the Ganges; and the Incas of ancient Peru gave a young man, prepared by certain ceremonies, to the sun.

Modern centuries have modified the doctrine somewhat, yet it is still with us. The mother suffers for her child; the father substitutes his body in labor for the family. Our nation exists because of the substitutionary offerings of 1776 and 1861. The Magna Charta and the Declaration of Independence are two great monuments erected, not only to human progress, but to the splendid memory of the men who *suffered*, not only for themselves, but for all who came after them.

The greatest emblem, however, of vicarious suffering is the cross of Jesus Christ. Somehow, in a manner in which we may never be able to explain, the cross is connected with our salvation. "Behold," said John the Baptist at the river of Jordan, "the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world." "Christ died for our sins," said Paul; and the statement of Peter is: "Who his own self bare our sins in his body upon the tree, that we, having died unto sins, might live unto righteous-

ness; by whose stripes ye were healed." This is possibly the most sublime tenet of the Christian faith. Its height is quite beyond the flight of mortal spirit. God so loved that he *gave*; Jesus so loved that he *died* that all might have life abundantly through his name.

Sin and guilt are much deeper than law and culture. The latter are in the major external; the former can be reached only by divine ministration. Hence Jesus Christ, acting on his own initiative, made the cross not only the world's altar of expiation, but also the doorway into everlasting life. It was of his own volition; he was not compelled, save as *love* is compelling. It should be sufficient that he is "the way"; and men need not miss the relief of conscience and the blessing of everlasting life because they can not understand to its fullness the doctrine of vicarious suffering. The patient may know nothing of the technique of surgery; it is sufficient for him that he recovers his health. Jesus Christ is the great Physician, and by what instrumentality he makes us whole again need not give us undue concern; through him we have everlasting life.

III

Jesus announced, "I am come to preach liberty to the captives," and his is the greatest message men ever heard. Forget for a moment, if you can, your hope of everlasting life, and ten thousand tormenting demons rise out of the abyss. There is nothing in the whole round of nature, of law or philosophy, that is able to quiet the fears of the soul. It is small wonder that before the coming of Christ men were driven to the awful extremity of sacrificing their own flesh and blood in the hope of obtaining relief of conscience. But when Christ enters, light floods the soul and confidence takes up her abode within. Honest men dare anything for him, and, rather than surrender their faith, will go to the stake.

The keyword of Christ's influence upon the heart is "peace." His "Fear not" has echoed across the centuries, and his "Come unto me" is the sweetest invitation the weary sons of men have ever heard.

O thou blessed Saviour of mankind, we adore thee because thou didst lift the burden of guilt from our weary shoulders and

didst bear it thyself. It hath been rolled away, we know not where, but our souls rejoice that it hath departed and that liberty hath come in its stead. The crimson stains of sin have somehow, in the alchemy of divine redemption, faded into the snowy whiteness of wool, and in thee we stand clean again. It is not in our own merit, nor in the power of human wisdom, nor yet in any attained perfection, but in the foolishness of the cross, that we are made perfect. Thou didst die for us, Lord and Master, and we would follow thee through the door which thou didst open for all mankind.

XVIII

JOSEPH: THE UNEXPECTED MAN

(Mark 15: 42-46; Luke 23: 50-53.)

DID you ever try to imagine the silence of a battlefield the first night after the troops had been withdrawn? All around are the grewsome reminders of the conflict—the broken artillery, the splintered debris, the fragments of shell, the battered messengers of death, the scattered arms, the bodies of the slain—all baptized with the pale light of the moon, ghastly and melancholy. It is the silence of the tomb; it is the bivouac of the dead.

As one reads this narrative of the trial and execution of our Lord, coming at length to this paragraph, he has something of the awe of spirit I imagine one might have felt had he stood on the field of Gettysburgh the night following the last day of that terrible conflict, or on the field of Waterloo when the soft moon shone on the thousand silent forms that had fallen ere

the spell of Napoleon's genius was broken by England's Iron Duke.

This narrative states that the Passover Sabbath was at hand. The infuriated mob had spent its passion and, like swine, had returned to its feeding-place; the green poison, seething in the hearts of the priests, was settling back to normal; but, even so, their hatred had by no means burned itself out. The malefactor was dead, the guard at the cross withdrawn. Even Jesus' acquaintances and the women who had followed him from Galilee "stood afar off." The silence is the more intense because of the clangor which went before.

One is hardly prepared for the man who emerges from this tumult. It was not Peter, though he may have wept his sad bosom empty by this time; neither was it John, though he may have taken Mary to his own home hours before; neither was it any of the twelve who might be expected to see that Christ's body was decently interred. It might have been thrown in the Vale of Hinnom, so far as they were concerned. It remained for an unknown man to come forward and give the dead Christ a resting-place in his own new tomb. By

a strange coincidence the earthly life of Jesus opens with a Joseph watching by the manger, and it was the hands of another Joseph that wrapped the clean linen about his pierced body and performed the last tokens of respect and love.

The picture is this: Three crosses on a hill near to Jerusalem. The red rays of the evening sun fell upon the bit of rugged landscape where the Son of God hung dead. Two members of the Jewish council—Joseph and Nicodemus—had watched that day's events with more than ordinary interest, interest which deepened into conviction. When the divine Sufferer bowed his head, Joseph went boldly to Pilate and asked for the body. Hastily, though tenderly, they conveyed it to the new tomb, and prepared it for burial.

I

Looking at the events with which each of the Gospel writers closes his narrative, a man might conclude that society was wholly corrupt. But an unknown and an unexpected man came forward at this crisis, revealing to us a splendid soul. There are not a few in our age who look upon society

as decadent, if not in the last stages of corruption. These few are possessed of the conceit that they are all that stand between the world and destruction. Even so good a man as Elijah gave utterance to a declaration which is wholly unlike the heroic spirit that burned in his breast normally: "I have been very jealous for Jehovah, the God of hosts; for the children of Israel have forsaken thy covenant, thrown down thine altars, and slain thy prophets with the sword: *and I, even I only, am left; and they seek my life, to take it away.*" It is hardly like Elijah to think that he was the only one that was true to the faith of his fathers. Not a few Christians have fallen into the same morbid spirit of self-congratulation. They insist that men be "orthodox" by the rule of *one*, and they the *one*, and when the rule is disregarded, the collapse of faith is inevitable! It is not a healthful attitude of the mind that conceives itself to be the peg that keeps all humanity from sliding into Hades. God has other hands than ours pulling at the levers of the universe, and he has other backs that bear burdens for him, men and women who are as diligent and as faithful

in their places as are we, and possibly with less ostentation. There was the "good man of the house" where Jesus and the twelve had kept the Passover but a few hours before, and here are two more men, honorable, influential, high-principled, who come forward and take charge after the "orthodox" had forsaken and fled.

Again, we are likely to estimate the effect of the gospel upon our community by its visible results; say, the number of converts, church-members. But that may mean nothing, for, if the work of Jesus on the eve of his crucifixion had been thus estimated, it would have been included in twelve men and a handful of women, and a few hours later even the twelve forsook him. But the influence of Jesus did not stop with these twelve erratic souls. As quietly as the sun's rays it had slipped into other hearts, hearts less impulsive than Peter's, and possibly less demonstrative than John's. There were at least two who had come under the influence of Christ's magnetic presence. These had had the courage to stand for him in the Sanhedrin, and as the opposition grew more flagrant in its disregard for right and justice, and

as the physical suffering of the Christ grew more acute, their faith in him increased accordingly, and finally mounted to the point where they stepped out in calm dignity and took charge. In the most unexpected place the teaching of Jesus had blossomed into fragrance and beauty—in the Sanhedrin.

Preaching Jesus is the most fascinating business in the world. Every imaginable condition is before the gospel herald—beaten ground, shallowness, thorns, and good and honest hearts. In hope he scatters the seed, and with sorrow notes the coming of the fowls, the choking thorns and the withering plant that tried to grow out of the shallow earth. There is joy over the productivity of the good and honest heart—a hundred-fold. He is not responsible *how* they hear, but *what* they hear; nor for the *soil*, but for the *seed*. “In the morning sow thy seed, and in the evening withhold not thine hand.”

II

John says that Joseph was a secret disciple for fear of the Jews. It is difficult to determine how much stress we may place

on "disciple," though we may suppose it was considerably more than a passing interest in Jesus and his teaching. Men do the most of their "plunging" before they are thirty-five years of age. Wealth, legislation and religion are the most conservative trinity in human experience; distressingly so at times! Joseph was influenced by each member of it. Not many people in middle life are changing their church relationships, especially those of wealth and position; Joseph was no exception. To him Jesus was a teacher of attractive power, a hater of shams, a rebuker of hypocrisy, a lover of truth, a helper of the needy. Joseph was a man of family, of business, and a member of the Jewish council. There had been no particular reason, up to this time, why he should invite the hostility of his compatriots, and this certainly implied no disrespect for Jesus. Joseph was on the *other side* of the crucifixion and the resurrection, yet there is no reason to conclude that he had stultified his conscience, for quite the reverse seems to be true. No man of his type enjoys trouble, and his conservative nature kept him out of it. It may be better to be a "secret" disciple and

do as he did than to be an "open" disciple and do as the twelve did; in fact, the twelve do not gain very much in comparison with Joseph and Nicodemus up to this time.

Mythology has it that Minerva sprang fully grown and fully armed from the brain of Zeus, but the Christ consciousness is not formed thus quickly in a man's mind. To the Galatians Paul wrote: "I am again in travail *until Christ be formed in you.*" It is a spiritual process, and with some a long and difficult one, yet not impossible. It takes time to grasp the profound significance of the Saviourhood of our Lord; it is one thing to know him historically; it is quite something else to be the temple of the Holy Spirit.

Up to this time there was no reason for haste, and Joseph moved slowly. He framed his premises carefully and drew his conclusions deliberately, yet there is no doubt that Christ was forming within. But these closing hours were forcing conclusions on questions long held open. The expiring Christ demanded explanations, and there could be but one. Joseph's horizon was receding, his foundations shifting, his ancient faith near a collapse. In common

with the aged Zacharias and a few others of that interesting third of a century, he sat in the pale glow of the Christian dawn "looking for the kingdom." But he was at a loss to know how this dying Galilean was to fit into the traditional Jewish scheme. He knew the Messianic pattern; he was sure there could be no mistake, and yet here was Jesus so much grander and more sublime than the historic conception, even though dying on the cross. Perhaps, after all, the Jewish fathers had made the Messiah fit their longings rather than grasping the full force of the divine conception. They clung to the shell of prophecy, but the Spirit broke through and escaped. So Joseph made no effort to harmonize the two views; he took Jesus as he was.

Men ought not to feel compelled to harmonize every apparent contradiction between faith and science, or within faith itself. Nor should these difficulties stand between us and Jesus Christ. I can not tell how light and heat pass through the ninety-one million miles of space between me and the sun, but that should not hinder me from enjoying the warmth and beauty

of the sunlight. Nor does the fact that I can not explain the phenomenon of hearing prevent me from enjoying harmony of sound and social intercourse with my friends. Now, when we step into the domain of revelation it is well to remember that this is the Lord's doing; we are touching the Divine Mind, the Infinite Intelligence; hence there are many things past human understanding. But because we can not understand and explain the mysteries of redemption is no reason why we can not enjoy the blessing of it and its full-orbed glory.

III

Joseph answered the call. Certainly there is no shrinking back here. His fine soul blazed out and he stood positively for the Lord. It takes courage to stand with the minority, especially when the majority is composed of such powerful and blood-thirsty villains as these murderers of Christ. But note the *man*: he went *boldly* to Pilate, he took the body of Jesus and *laid it in his own sepulchre*. The Sanhedrin knew it was Joseph's sepulchre, for they placed a guard to watch. Against that dark background

the splendid manhood of Joseph stands out in wonderful relief.

The persecution of the innocent always has the opposite effect from that intended. The Church made rapid growth in the first centuries although base men persecuted it, but, instead of exterminating it, they called multitudes to its membership. The heart of man is natively set against unfairness. Instead of heaping ignominy upon Jesus, even the very instrument of torture has become the most honored symbol among men.

Self-protection may be among the first laws of nature; but when a great principle is at stake, when the fundamentals are assailed, men very quickly forget the personal side. Self and selfish interests, even home and its tender associations, drop out of sight. It is a characteristic of manhood; perhaps it may be called a moral virtue. In any event, it is one of the inherent marks which man bears in common with his God; it is one of the lines in the Father's face which appears in the spiritual visage of the twice-born child. If a man can stand unmoved in the presence of a great wrong, there is something radically at fault with

his eyes; either he has not yet seen God, or else he is incapable of moral discrimination. To get the correct view, a man must look at everything—*everything*—through God. If he reverses it, his view will be colored and crooked, dark and diminished. Joseph was “looking for the kingdom,” for Christ had touched his experience. In this moment of grave stress the councilor stepped out unexpectedly, revealing the strength of a Christ-filled soul.

Blessed Christ, human eyes have looked at the death of the Son of God upon the cross when he hung helpless and forsaken beneath the crimson rays of a dying day. Thou didst enter the house of the strong man, bind him and set the captives free. We believe thou didst fight the battle and win the victory—for us.

We thank thee for the two good men who ministered unto thee in death when those whom thou didst love were panic-stricken; we thank thee for the “unknown” men who take up the work from which we in our cowardice often flee. As the hush of death surrounds that new tomb, may we watch with the weeping women, knowing there shall be a glorious dawn.

XIX

MARY: THE SLANDERED MAGDALENE

(John 20: 1, 2, 11-18.)

JOSEPH and Mary stand at the beginning of the earthly life of Jesus, and another Joseph and Mary stand at its close. It was Mary of Nazareth who first looked into the eyes of the infant Christ; it was Mary of Magdala who first looked into the eyes of the risen Lord. In the days of his flesh this splendid woman had become his faithful and devoted follower. Out of her substance (and she seems to have been a wealthy woman) she had ministered to him and his work. She was present at his death and burial. On the morning of the first day of the week, she was back to his tomb "while it was yet dark." Yet, for all her splendid devotion to the Lord, the Christian world has most basely slandered her; they have made her one and the same with the sinful woman who anointed the feet of Jesus in the house

of Simon the Pharisee, and "Magdalene" has become a synonym of "harlot." Chivalry, if nothing else, demands that Christian manhood come to her defense and rescue her good name from the blight of immorality. Biblical literature has no character more noble, or more worthy to stand by the side of Hannah, Elisabeth, or any of the great women of Israel, or the Christian Church.

I

There is real pathos in the aimless wanderings of those friends of Jesus. "I will smite the shepherd and scatter the sheep;" and there was never a more purposeless group than they that Passover Sabbath. Like the needle that feels the pull of the magnetic pole, yet is unable to remain constant because of disturbing and intermittent currents, so these friends of Jesus could not find themselves. That great magnetic pole to whom they would gladly have been true still held a degree of power over them, but other influences, for the moment terrifically potent, beat against them. Was it all over? That was their conviction—almost. He of whom they had hoped so much had come to an igno-

minious end in a malefactor's tomb; but the imprint of his presence was still too vivid to be forgotten. So there were questionings about him, even impulses to return to their former occupations; they went their way. But Mary thought only of the tomb and the body it contained, and hither she came to weep.

Blessed tears! Drop by drop they bear away the agony of the heart, spilling it on the breast of kind old mother earth, to come forth, not in thorns and bitter herbs, but in blossoms and fragrance. So, in the keen sorrow that filled her heart, Mary left her couch before the dawn to pour out her tears at the tomb of Him whose words and presence had been her meat and drink. But the stone was rolled away. Without making further examination, she ran to Peter and John. They rushed to the sepulchre and then went home, but not so with Mary; she returned to the grave, which, though robbed of its precious body, was sacred to her because of Him whose form it had so recently contained.

What a human touch is here! She was standing outside weeping, "and as she wept she stooped down and looked into the

tomb." Did you ever see a mother sit and weep over her departed child, and then did you note her as she stole away to weep by the side of the little cradle which had so lately held the form of her baby? She gets consolation in beholding the things which ministered to the comfort of her little one. So Mary stooped to look once again at the place where the Lord had lain.

When she stooped to look into that vault she expected to see nothing more than the dimly lighted recess, with the linen cloths lying as Peter and John had dropped them after their hasty examination, yet she wanted to view it again. What a revelation came with the second look! Instead of the gloom, two radiant forms!—"angels," says John. And I have thought that we might find something worth while if we would only take the second look. Affliction comes with a shock, often as sudden and as blinding as a flash of lightning. For a moment a man may lose his bearings, his sense of direction, and not infrequently do some lose their faith entirely and become hard and bitter and cynical. The test of a soldier is not how he acts when on parade, but rather

how he stands the strain of the battle. Death is the natural and inexorable law, and unto it every animate thing is subject. Disasters may come to us as they have to men ever since the beginning. The solemn, stately, and sometimes awful, tread of natural law knows no exemptions, has no favorites. Blessed is he who does not allow his heart to harden, but, like Mary, comes back to the tomb and *looks in*. The second view was not a dark, dismal cleft, but a glorious vision of two shining presences. And if you will go back to that tomb in which you have buried your dearest possession—child, companion, parent, ambition, what not; that tomb from which you once turned away with resentment and rebellion; go back after the smoke of the disaster has vanished; go back after the flowers have blossomed on the little mound; go back after the tears are dry and the eye sees single—you may behold a vision that will rejoice your soul. Humility is a grace we need to cultivate.

II

Even the presence of the angels and their assurances failed to awaken Mary's consciousness to the splendid fact that Jesus

was alive. She was among the habiliments of death, and even angels could not impress her otherwise. But as she turned herself from the door of the tomb, she beheld a man standing near whose question was: "Why weepest thou?" To this she replied: "If thou hast borne him hence, tell me where thou hast laid him, and I will take him away." There is a class of intelligences, other than undertakers, who seem to take a great deal of morbid pleasure in living among the dead. For them coffins and shrouds have a hypnotic fascination. I do not take it that Mary had any such motive in asking for the body of Jesus; she was anxious that it should have a decent final resting-place.

It was not intended that our minds should dwell upon death, for it is not a wholesome subject. The New Testament has little to say about the death of the body, but it has much to say about the life of the soul. It bases its appeal, not upon the avoidance of death, but upon the entrance into life. If the soul is constantly laboring to escape death, it will as constantly feel its blight, its terror, its melancholy restraint; but when the soul works for life and

contemplates it, it is at once sown with ten thousand seeds bursting with inspiration, seeds that proclaim the springtime where the season is always in the ascendant and the night never comes.

There is a tendency in our day to place Jesus on a par with other great teachers of morals—or, possibly, a little above. His teachings in the main are accepted, but the cardinal fact of his life—that is, his resurrection—is rejected, or explained in such a manner as to mean nothing. *If Christianity does not have a risen Christ, then it has no Christ; if it does not have a risen Christ, then it has no message for the world.* Jesus taught nothing essentially new in morals; certainly not, unless interpreted in the light of the resurrection. When a person seeks to make converts to Christianity by glossing over this fact, or by explaining it other than do the New Testament writers, he is giving his cause away, and would do as much towards binding up the broken hearts of men were he to teach the precepts of Buddha or the maxims of Confucius or the wisdom of the Vedas. Without the resurrection there is no Christianity; a dead Christ is no Christ. “If

Christ hath not been raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins;" and the centuries have yet to produce a valid reason for rejecting the Apostle's conclusion.

III

All through his ministry Jesus had taught his resurrection in unmistakable terms, but not until Mary heard her name spoken by his blessed lips did the meaning of all that teaching reach her understanding. The best she had in her heart was to make his body secure from vandals and weep over the memories of the past. Any one who makes their sorrow an occasion for dropping out of active Christian service would do well to take a second look at the tomb. Memory will always hold its sacred treasures, but they must never be allowed to vitiate our Christian lives.

Whereas Mary would have given the dead Christ a vine-grown tomb with roses blossoming about it and a well-beaten path from her door to that sacred spot, Jesus gave her, not a dead memory for her flowing tears, but rather he came to her as a living reality, a glorious Divine Presence, the same Lord she had known and loved

so well. And he always does better for us than we are able to ask or think. The sacred spot of China is where the honored dust of Confucius rests, but Christianity's Christ is *living*, and his promise is: "I am with you always, even to the end." The glory of our holy religion is not in strict dogmas and splendid doctrines, nor especially in its truth and precept and promise, but rather in the unique fact that the Holy Spirit dwells in every true Christian heart, and that above all is the living and eternal Christ.

Mary came to the tomb with a crushed spirit, but one word from Jesus swept her grief away forever. This has always been a pre-eminent characteristic of our Lord. Wherever he went through Palestine flowers of gladness blossomed—by the bier of the widow's son, at the grave of Lazarus, in the nobleman's house. And when Christianity began to be defined and have an influence on the world beyond Judea, the effect of Jesus upon the heart was always the same. Men brought him their bruised spirits, their crooked and misspent lives, their sin-enslaved bodies; despair, like the "ominous bird of night," sat at the portal

of their hearts, but Jesus took their burdens and bitterness away and joy came instead. Begin at the Jordan with the first life he touched, follow him through the ages—Paul, Augustine, St. Francis, Luther—to the latest convert, and the result is unvarying, unspeakable joy.

IV

We can not know the ecstasy in Mary's word, "Rabboni!" when she saw Jesus actually standing before her, but we may be sure it was worth the long hours of mental agony and all that deep darkness, to come at last into such glorious light and hear again that familiar greeting, "Mary!" It was Jesus as she had never seen him before. She stood near, watching the councilors as they wrapped his body in the sweet spices, but to her then Jesus was a man, a *dead* man; now he stood before her, not only as a living man, but as the living God.

We experience something of Mary's joy when we open our hearts to him. We may spend half our lifetime reading of him and acquiring facts about his life; we may travel in the land he made sacred by his

presence, and we may be able to repeat many of his choice sayings, and all that; but there is a very vital sense in which a man can never know Jesus until he opens the door and gives him the freedom of the house. Then he will begin to appreciate something of Magdalene's joy when she beheld the risen Lord two thousand years ago, and his soul will rejoice in the happiness of its new-found Friend. When one passes through this experience he may doubt many things, but he will never doubt the presence of the living Christ.

"I have seen the Lord." With these words Mary makes her exit from the sacred pages, but could there be a more sublime testimony? When men look at us they have the right to expect that we bear unusual testimony because we have made an unusual profession. We have said that we believe that Jesus Christ is the risen Son of God and that the Holy Spirit dwells in the heart of the believer. It is a wonderful conception, yet when we attempt to speak in the strong voice of a Christ-dominated manhood we lisp and stutter and the world indulgently smiles. Perhaps it is justified in concluding that our vision is nothing

other than the disordered images floating out of a heat-oppressed brain. When men and women who claim to have the miracle of grace wrought in their hearts put Jesus and his work in the very last place, or even on the *extra list*, they can not expect the sinner to be very much impressed when they tell how much Jesus means to them.

"I have seen the Lord." After years of wandering, Sir Launfal beheld him in the beggar; I will see him as I walk among the Christless ones; I will see him looking through the dark eyes of a soul rescued from heathenism; I will see his hand uplifted where men are weary. Only as we forget ourselves will we get a glimpse of his face.

O thou holy Christ of God, we believe thou didst stand before this good woman two thousand years ago. We pray for a faith that will not forsake thee even when the light of God seems darkness. Give us the grace to wait by the side of our dark, unexplainable difficulties, for in a tomb the angels appeared. And as we move among our fellows, we pray that there may be the unmistakable evidence of the abiding Spirit within our hearts that men may know that we have seen the Lord.

XX

DISPOSING OF TROUBLESOME FACTS

(Matt. 28: 11-15.)

WHEN men attempt to dam up the streams of God's purpose they usually find themselves floundering in the rising tide. Facts are always troublesome things—to the evil-doer. It is the immutable law that facts and acts must be in perfect alignment. This little coterie of Jewish priests and elders were so industriously working to obscure the divinity of Jesus that they forgot the swing of the Almighty was not bounded by Jericho and Joppa, but that he walks the waveless skies and sits among the myriad stars. Said David:

“He that sitteth in the heavens will laugh:
The Lord will have them in derision.”

Never did men fight more recklessly against the stately march of the Lord God, or call more desperately upon the powers of darkness for assistance; but Cæsar's seal

was nothing; Cæsar's guard, less. If there were ever a complete demonstration of the doctrine of total depravity, it was here, for here hell burned through. Defeat sometimes throws men into panic, but here is no panic. When men sit down as calmly as these and plan to meet a great crisis, they certainly are not terror-stricken. The villainy of Judas opened in his heart that awful stream of remorse whose scalding torrent deluged his withered and lonely soul; but here is a group of men across whose hearts the scorching winds of malice and hatred had swept with such consuming rage that even the possibility of remorse was burned up and nothing remained but the acrid and bitter residuum which Matthew expresses in these few words. With them it was not a question of knowing the facts; rather, how to raise dust enough to obscure them.

I

The world of Christian fact is the world of God. This is not to affirm that the Christian world is all of God's world. But if the Scriptures are entitled to any credit, we must admit that the center of God's

moral universe, so far as we are concerned, is not far from Joseph's tomb. If we are to judge the Divine Mind by revelation, then we are justified in concluding that these years of Jesus among men were concerned in laying the true foundations of the Christian faith, and it is not irreverent to say that in this God extended himself in man's behalf. The world in which Jesus lived and moved was peculiar to the Divine Mind, and the facts of Christianity are peculiar to a revealed religion. But it was intended in all this that these great facts should form the postulate, the major premise of our faith.

We can not give a scientific demonstration of Christianity. It can not be heated in the crucible, nor can we grow cultures of it in the test-tube; it refuses to yield its secrets to the microscope, and it does not furnish even a beginning-point for the dissector's scalpel; it can neither be weighed nor measured, nor has it temperature or dimensions. But it has, nevertheless, its important data, and out of this data we get what we have been pleased to term the facts of Christianity. The size and weight of the superstructure prove that the foun-

dation is solid, but Christianity belongs almost entirely to the spiritual, which is the world of God—so far as we know it.

The human mind is in search of those things which will stand the test. It does not concern itself long with the ephemeral and evanescent fancies of the dreamer. "If there is solid rock where and what is it?" is its earnest query. If we are to have peace of mind, we must know something of the fundamentals. If faith rests on dogma, ignorance or superstition, or all three, then it can neither be free nor healthy. It must strike its roots into something unshaken and unshakable. We do not hesitate to put the facts of Christianity into the crucible, because we have the utmost faith in their ability to stand the test. If you have noticed the New Testament narrative, there has been no favor shown, there has been none asked. Jesus Christ accepted the very worst that human depravity could devise, and after, under hellish pressure, they had exhausted their villainy, he came out of the depths like a wonderful lily—white and marvelous. Is it strange that men have been impressed by such facts?

Scientists are continually revising their conclusions because they are constantly making new discoveries. The same is true of religionists—some religionists! No man dare affirm the theology of a hundred years ago any more than he dare affirm the science of a century back. It was once heresy to read the record of God in the rocks and to affirm that the earth was round. Science and dogma have always had trouble, and always will, because science is always young and always has a “nose for news.” Dogma is always old and rheumatic, with an inherent nature to fossilize. But dogma is not religion, and in true religion science finds her long-lost twin. In both there are a few things which are unchangeable. For religion the tomb of Joseph will never lose its profound significance; and from this sacred spot our Christian faith begins its pilgrimages because it is the demonstration of that one surpassing fact which lies back of all else: “God is love.”

II

There are some facts which are unpleasant and distasteful to some people, but

honest men are always anxious to get the exact truth. This explains every chemical, biological and psychological laboratory in the land. Progress is marked only by knowledge of the secrets of the things we handle every day. Everything has its place in the universe, else we would have a multi-verse—confusion and disorder. It may be that the “known” will have to be readjusted in the light of fresh discoveries. The Copernican theory upset the older Ptolemaic, but it did the world no harm. Columbus did not prove the Bible untrue when he reached the east by sailing west, but he upset the old dogma of a flat earth. The real harm comes in the spirit that reaches its hand for the throat of the investigator, which anathematizes science and its paraphernalia as devices of the devil. This is the spirit of the Inquisition, of the Dark Ages, of intolerance; it is the spirit that crucified our Lord.

Those degenerate priests found themselves in an unusual position that Sunday morning. That the soldiers' story was true was not questioned; there is no hint of denial or of incredulity; they accepted it as true beyond doubt. But they knew

that it would be impossible to keep these facts quiet; the disciples of Jesus would soon be telling it, the soldiers would be telling it. If the two told the same story, so much the worse for the priests. There was but one thing left—put another story in the mouths of the soldiers; hence “they gave much money unto them.” The “truth” is an expensive luxury! But this method seldom fails of results. The Illinois State Legislature recently revealed the shameful depravity of its members. One man in Chicago is credited with saying that he could take \$50,000 and pass any bill he chose. The Jewish council did not make this discovery nor did they obtain a perpetual copyright on the scheme. It is as old as the race, yet as young as to-day. It is one way men have of “explaining the facts.”

But a bribe usually necessitates a lie, and lies are social creatures and move in large companies. This “lie” which these Jewish “religionists” put into the mouths of the soldiers had three parts: (1) His disciples came by night; (2) they stole the body; (3) while we slept. The facts are that the disciples never understood the

teaching of Jesus concerning the resurrection, hence they had no idea of trying to propagate his doctrines after his death; for what was to be gained? All through Christ's ministry their idea was a restored temporal kingdom, and when Christ died their hope died. The statement that a company of disciplined Roman soldiers slept while on duty is absurd, especially as the penalty was death. And that eleven unarmed, discouraged disciples should have the presumption even to attempt to steal the body from these armed Roman soldiers is the climax of nonsense. But for money the soldiers were willing to incriminate themselves.

Hence the chief priests promised to "fix it" with the Roman judge if it ever came to a hearing before him. These are the means by which base men proposed to meet the facts of the resurrection: bribery, lying, buying the judge. And they are all too common crimes in American public life. But facts are not thus driven out of existence. They may be bludgeoned into the earth, but, like the blood of Hyacinthus, will blossom into rare and beautiful flowers. Truth claims the wide sweep of eternity as

her inherent possession, and into her own she will eventually come.

III

Here is an interesting study in effects. Take the priests and elders: The irony of it is that they were the *religious* leaders of Israel. Out of those twisted and atrophied things they called *hearts* dripped the distilled venom of hatred which seared and blistered everything it touched, but its worst effect was upon themselves. They deliberately counseled to thwart the purpose of God by keeping men in ignorance of the resurrection, or, at least, by casting every possible doubt upon the fact. They knew Christ had risen, and that it could be only by divine power. "Come down," said they at the cross, "and we will believe;" but here Jesus had done a more marvelous thing, and instead of belief they plunged into deeper depravity.

They were Israel's *spiritual* interpreters. What a ghastly mockery of the splendid system of Moses, and how far removed from the wonderful spirit of Isaiah! There is something terrible about the acts of these men. One experiences something of the

feeling when he wanders with Dante through the inferno, or when he listens with Milton to the shouts that "tore hell's concave." Samson pulled the Philistine temple down upon himself and the revelers, but these men were doing a thousand times worse; they were pulling destruction down on the last remnant of the nation which the faith of Abraham had rejoiced to see. Yet out of the crash and dust of the falling structure came the facts of the Son of God—unharméd. They fit into the human conscience perfectly, and to reject them is to strangle the soul.

It is interesting to conjecture what must have passed in the minds of the soldiers. They were in contact with the representatives of the "one true religion," which of all religions was the most narrow and intolerant. But what had the Jews' religion made of them? Rather, what had they made of their religion? Even those pagan soldiers had enough moral sense to know that they were beside themselves with hatred. How did this brand of religion, which permitted bribery, lying and perverted justice, impress the soldiers? "What you are speaks so loud that I can not hear

what you say." It is what a man does when not thinking of his church affiliation, what he does when following his natural impulses and inclinations, that gives his fellows their estimate of the worth of his religion and his moral character. Those Jews had done an injury to the moral nature of those soldiers which was irreparable.

All this villainy hurled against the new faith had precisely the opposite effect from that intended. Never was testimony more universally discredited than theirs. The very first proclamation of the mission of Jesus and his invitation unto men turned Jerusalem upside down. The impact of the new faith upon Judaism was terrific, because it had the indisputable proof of the risen Christ.

O God, we thank thee that in the Christian universe there is one sublime fact upon which we postulate our faith and from which we make our journeys. The vicious assaults of men have only added to its glory; they have been the storms which have cleared the atmosphere and have aided the growth of the sturdy oak. Thou art our shield and defense, and thou hast made the wrath of men to praise thee.



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